

Collections Documentation Policy



Name of museum: Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum

Name of governing body: Warwick District Council

Date on which this policy was approved by governing body: August 2018

Policy review procedure:

The collections development policy will be published and reviewed from time to time, at least once every five years.

Date at which this policy is due for review: July 2023

Introduction

Documentation underpins every aspect of museum activity. The purpose of our documentation system is to:

1. Establish exactly what is in the collections at any one time
2. Establish Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum's legal rights and responsibilities for those collections
3. Maintain an up to date location record for every object in the collections
4. Link objects with their associated information, including provenance, associations and collections management history
5. Enable retrieval of objects and their associated information
6. Enable access to objects and their associated information for staff and volunteers through the Modes Complete database
7. Enable access to objects and their associated information for the public through an online database
8. Provide insurance information for Warwick District Council
9. Provide audit information for Warwick District Council

Aims and Objectives

The aim of this Policy is to ensure that we fulfill our guardianship, stewardship and access responsibilities. Through implementation of this policy, our objective is to:

- Improve accountability for the collections
- maintain at least minimum professional standards in documentation procedures and collection information and attain the very highest standards wherever possible
- Extend access to collection information
- Strengthen the security of the collections

Accountability

The museum will follow the accountability principles defined by the Museums and Galleries Commission:

"to enable museums to fulfill their fundamental responsibilities for collections and the information associated with them. The principles are that a museum should know at any time exactly for what it is legally responsible (this includes loans as well as permanent collections), and where each item is located." (MGC 1993)

Levels of Documentation

The museum is committed to record significant information about the objects in our care so that each object we are legally responsible for (including loans as well as long term collections) can be identified and located.

For the majority of our collections, curatorial staff will document to individual item level. However, when it is neither feasible nor practical to document the material in this detail, we will document items at group level.

We will document our collections in compliance with SPECTRUM Primary Procedures. In addition, wherever possible we will record additional information such as the known history of an object or artwork, contextual information, and references to any relevant publications, etc.

Computerisation of Records

Collections information will be recorded on Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum's collections management system (currently Modes Complete). In order to preserve the database, the system will be maintained by Warwick District Council's ICT services and through subscription to the MODES Users Association. Manual back-ups will be made by curatorial staff when substantial changes have been made.

Controlled Access to Sensitive Information

All requests for information will be considered in terms of compliance with the Freedom of Information Act (2000) and Data Protection Act (2018). We will review requests for confidential data such as donor information or valuations on a case by case basis, and in accordance with the applicable legislation and any legal agreements or conditions of gift.

Security Against Loss of Irreplaceable Collection Information

We have in place measures to ensure the physical security and long-term preservation of all documentation records, whether paper or computerised. We will update all manual and computerised records as appropriate. The Modes server will be backed up with the following schedule:

Daily Backups - Taken over the last two week periods capturing daily changes

Weekly backups - Full backup of server taken at the weekend and saved for a four week period

Monthly backups - one of the weekly backups has its retention period extended to a maximum six month as a long-term backup. These are stored in a fire proof safe off-site.

Object entry

Deposits of material for Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum will be accepted for the following purposes:

- Consideration for accessioning into the collections
- Objects on loan for display or identification

No object should be deposited without the authorisation of the Arts Manager, Collections & Engagement Manager, or Curators.

An entry form must be completed for all deposits. These are stored in the paper safe in the Fine Art Store and will be held in perpetuity as a record of the object.

A deposit will be returned if:

- The object is deemed not suitable for accessioning into the collections
- The loan period, for display or identification, has ended

Objects that are not accepted into the collections should be returned to the depositor. If the depositor cannot be contacted after a period of no less than 3 months and after formal notice in writing, the object will be disposed of in accordance with the procedures set out in the Collections Development Policy.

Loans and identifications that are not collected / returned after a period of no less than three months from the end of the agreed loan period will be disposed of in accordance with the procedures set out in the Collections Development Policy and after seeking appropriate legal advice.

Acquisition

See Collections Development Policy 2017-2023

History Files

Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum will collect and store contextual and historical information relating to objects in the collection.

The information will be cross-referenced with the object and details stored or referenced on the Modes Complete catalogue.

Labelling and Marking

Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum will label and / or mark all objects in the collections in order to maintain a connection between an object and its associated information.

Labelling and marking techniques will be used that are:

- Appropriate for the object
- Durable yet reversible

Loans in

Loans in may be accepted for the following purposes:

- Exhibition or display
- Photography or publication
- Research

Loans in will be accepted for a minimum of 1 week and a maximum of 5 years.

Loans in can only be authorised by the Arts Manager, Collections & Engagement Manager, or Curators.

The lender's title to the object will be established using due diligence.

Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum will be responsible for the 'nail to nail' insurance of the object(s) and they shall be insured at the valuations advised by the lender.

The object(s) borrowed will normally be housed in secure storage areas or displayed in securely locked and glazed cases or, if two-dimensional works, securely fixed to the wall.

The object(s) will be housed in areas of appropriate temperature and relative humidity, and in appropriate lux and UV levels at all times.

The object(s) loaned will not be taken to any address other than Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum, The Royal Pump Rooms, The Parade, Leamington Spa, without the prior consent of the lender.

No label or other identifying marking will be moved or obliterated.

No object will be cleaned, conserved or treated by the borrower under any circumstances whatsoever without the prior written consent of the lender.

The object(s) will not be handled unnecessarily. On return, the loan will be packed in the same way as it was received.

Acknowledgement will be made to the lender in a form and style agreed with the lender.

Access to the loaned object(s) will be allowed at all reasonable times to any properly authorised officer of the lender.

Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum shall immediately inform the lender of any damage to, deterioration in the condition of, or loss of any object on loan. This notification will be confirmed in writing.

Taking of photographs using non-flash photography for non-commercial use is permitted for Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum staff.

Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum usually permits members of the public to take photographs in the galleries using non-flash photography provided it is solely for personal use and not for publication. In the case of borrowed objects permission will be sought from the lender.

Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum considers requests to take photographs of or film objects for commercial purposes on a case by case basis. If the request relates to borrowed objects permission will be sought from the lender

It is the lender's responsibility to inform Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum of any change of contact details or circumstances. Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum do not accept any responsibility to trace the lender should circumstances change and reserve the right to dispose of

the objects(s) after a period of three months from the end of the agreed loan period as set out above.

If an owner has died, Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum will contact the executor if known, or seek legal advice with a view to either acquiring or disposing of the object(s) as set out above.

Loans out

Requests for loans out will be considered provided that the object(s) are in a suitable condition and are not required for display or other use by Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum.

Objects may be loaned to other Accredited museums. Other organisations and venues will be considered, providing that they meet necessary standards for the care of the objects. Objects may also be loaned to conservators as and when necessary for work to be carried out.

Objects may be loaned for exhibition tours.

Loans can be for up to 5 years, after which they may be considered for renewal, if appropriate.

Loans can only be authorised by Arts Manager, Collections & Engagement Manager, or Curators. Conditions:

Applications for loans should be submitted not less than 3 months before the date for which the loan is requested (or as agreed in writing with the Arts Manager).

The borrower shall be responsible for all costs as a result of the loan, including transport from and to Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum.

Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum may determine that a member of staff will act as a courier and supervise the unpacking / mounting and subsequent dismounting / packing of the object(s) in the borrower's institution, in which case the costs of travel, accommodation and subsistence of the courier will be met by the borrower.

The borrower shall be responsible for the insurance of the object(s) if required by Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum.

Unless otherwise stated on the Outward Loan Form the borrower shall insure the object(s) loaned at a valuation determined by Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum against all risks 'nail to nail', throughout their absence from and return to Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum.

The insurance policy must be approved by the Arts Manager or his / her representative. The object(s) will not be released to the borrower until evidence of insurance cover is produced. The valuation for insurance purposes will be stated on the Outward Loan form or an aggregate thereof.

The object(s) must be housed in areas of appropriate temperature and relative humidity, and in appropriate lux and UV levels at all times.

The object(s) borrowed for exhibition must normally be housed or displayed in securely locked and glazed cases or, if two-dimensional works, securely fixed to the wall.

The object(s) borrowed for exhibition must be shown in a properly invigilated gallery.

Any special protective measures that the Arts Manager may require shall be provided by the borrower.

The object(s) loaned must not be taken to any address(es) other than specified on the Outward Loan Form.

No label or other identifying marking will be moved or obliterated.

No object is to be cleaned, conserved or treated by the borrower without the prior written consent of the Arts Manager.

The object(s) will not be handled unnecessarily. On return, the loan must be packed in the same way as it was received and in its original packing materials.

Acknowledgement will be made to 'Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum (Warwick District Council)' in the display, exhibition notices and literature in a form and style specified by the Arts Manager. Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum will also be supplied with a copy of any publication issued in connection with the loan.

The object(s) will not be reproduced in any medium, including photographs, without the prior written consent of the Heritage & Arts Manager and, if applicable, the copyright holder.

Access to the loaned object(s) will be allowed at all reasonable times to any authorised officer of Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum.

Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum shall be immediately informed of any damage to, deterioration in the condition of, or loss of any object on loan. This notification must be confirmed in writing.

Requests to renew, transfer or cease the loan should be made in writing to Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum at the earliest opportunity.

The borrower indemnifies Warwick District Council, Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum and its officers against all claims or losses, howsoever caused, arising out of the loan of the object(s) specified on the Outward Loan Form and for so long as the object(s) are in the custody of the borrower.

Cataloguing

New acquisitions will be catalogued as soon as possible and within not more than six months after acquisition.

Each record will include:

- Accession number (under object identity)
- Object name (under identification)
- Number of objects or parts (include in brief description)
- Brief description (under identification)
- Acquisition method and date (under acquisition)
- Permanent location (under object location)
- Reference to available images (under reproduction)

If appropriate, each record will also include:

- Entry form number (under other identity)
- Name and date of recorder (under recorder)
- Classification information, e.g. SHIC code (under identification)

- Further description information, e.g. dimensions, inscriptions, material, date (under description)
- Any field collection information (under field collection)
- Production information, e.g. maker, technique (under production)
- Other historical information, e.g. previous use or associations (under association)
- References to published bibliographic information (under references)
- References to collections management information e.g. loans in or out, condition check, conservation, exhibition, reproduction, rights

As much information as possible about the object and its history should be recorded, or referenced within the record.

One of the following Modes templates will be used as a basis for recording each object (available in the Modes Complete programme).

- Archaeology 2
- Fine Art
- Social History
- Pictorial Representation
- Numismatics
- Decorative Art
- Ethnography
- Oral History

Location and Movement Control

- No person should move an object or access or amend a location record without the authorisation of the Arts Manager, Collections & Engagement Manager, or Curators.
- A record of up-to-date locations must be maintained for all objects in the collection.
- All storage areas must be locked at all times and only accessed under the authorisation of the Arts Manager, Collections & Engagement Manager, Curators, Facilities Supervisor or Duty Manager
- Objects on display must be within locked or screwed shut display cases or secured to the wall with security fittings.
- A record of all previous locations of an object should be maintained on the Modes Complete database, to act as an audit trail.

Object Exit

Object exit occurs during

- Return of unwanted gifts
- Return of loans in
- Return of objects left for identification
- Loans out
- Transfer to another organisation
- Deaccession / disposal (including destruction of the object)

- Move to the external store

Any object exit must be authorised by the Arts Manager, Collections & Engagement Manager, or Curators.

Retrospective Documentation

In the event of a documentation backlog, this will be addressed as soon as possible using a retrospective documentation plan, detailing the appropriate timescales and staff resources.

The retrospective documentation plan will ensure that the documentation backlog meets Spectrum Standards.

References

Documentation Procedural Manual
Collections Development Policy
Access Policy
Retrospective Documentation Plan