

Collection information policy

This policy guides how Historic Royal Palaces records and documents the knowledge and information we hold about the HRP collection. It outlines how this information will be maintained and improved upon in line with professional standards for collections management.

Industry standard terms have been used throughout and a glossary can be found at the end of this document

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This policy replaces and updates the
Collections Management Policy, 2009



**Historic
Royal Palaces**

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1 Purpose of Policy

Introduction

Historic Royal Palaces is an independent charity that looks after the Tower of London, Hampton Court Palace, Banqueting House, Kensington Palace, Kew Palace and Hillsborough Castle. Each is symbolic of the United Kingdom, and all have world significance. Once they were only for the privileged: now everyone can visit. They're not just places but palaces: buildings where monarchs and their courts lived, and where history was made. These palaces witnessed many of the defining moments of our nation, and collectively they explain much of the nation's story.

We give these palaces continuing life. We welcome people, we stage events and we entertain.

This Policy is part of HRP's Collections Management Policy Framework, which consists of:

- Collection Development Policy, 2014
- Collection Information Policy, 2014
- Collection Access Policy, 2014
- Collection Care and Conservation Policy, 2014
- Human Remains Policy, 2014

The purpose of the Collection Information Policy is to ensure we fulfil our responsibilities in relation to information and knowledge regarding HRP's collection, in line with the HRP Strategic Plan and in proportion to the resources available. This policy is intended to state the parameters for the standards of Collections Management that we apply as well as our key current terms of reference for best practice.

HRP comprises five Accredited Museums. The Accreditation Scheme is administered by Arts Council England (ACE) which sets nationally agreed standards for UK Museums.

In line with the Accreditation Scheme, this policy details how we will:

- improve accountability for HRP's collection and collection information.
- maintain at least minimum professional standards in documentation and collection information.
- strengthen the security of HRP's collection through accurate collection information.

Our strategy for the electronic safeguards for the Digital Asset Management System, is set out in the HRP Security Instructions.

2 Policy Implementation

Our policies and procedures are informed by relevant legal and ethical frameworks, alongside appropriate national and international standards, as set out in Appendix 1.

Managers should ensure that the Collections Management Policy Framework and supporting procedures/plans, as detailed below, are followed in the areas for which they are responsible.

- Collection Care and Conservation Plan, 2014
- Collections Management Procedures Manual
- Exhibition Conservation Specification
- Collection Object Security Procedures
- Learning and Engagement Strategy, 2013
- Digital Strategy, 2013
- Domestic Audiences Strategy, 2013
- Documentation Plan, 2014
- Security Instructions
- Major Incident Plan, 2013
- HRP Health Safety & Environmental Management System

3 Statement of Authority, Responsibilities, Cause, Principles and Strategic aims

Statement of Authority

HRP's Royal Charter 1998 established a Board of Trustees of Historic Royal Palaces. Under the Charter the 'objects of Historic Royal Palaces shall be, for the benefit of the nation:

to manage, conserve, renovate, repair, maintain and improve the palaces to a high standard consistent with their status as buildings of royal, historic and architectural importance; and

to help everyone to learn about the palaces, the skills required for their conservation and the wider story of how monarchs and people together have shaped society by providing public access, by exhibition, by events and education programmes, by the preparation of records, by research and by publication and by such other means as are appropriate.'

Responsibilities for the HRP collection

The Board of Trustees has ultimate responsibility for ensuring that the HRP collection at the palaces is maintained and used in accordance with the ordinances of HRP's Royal Charter.

The Chief Executive and Executive Board are responsible for ensuring that the Collections Management Policy Framework is implemented across the departments of HRP and for scheduled review of the policies.

The Director of the Conservation & Learning Department will ensure that the Collections Management Policy Framework is followed effectively by providing appropriate and adequate numbers of staff and financial resource to carry out the Collections Management Strategy each year. The Director of the Conservation & Learning Department will also advise and guide directors of other HRP departments in any areas where the policies affect their work.

The Collections Management Strategy Board consists of staff who have responsibility for the management of the HRP collection and together they advise, produce and implement the policies and strategy and ensure support for and delivery of the objectives and actions for Collections Management in HRP's Strategic Plan, Annual Operating Plans and Major Projects.

Collections management staff, collection-curators, conservators and security staff at HRP are responsible for carrying out the objectives given in the Collections Management Strategy, to the standards and procedures set out in the Collections Management Policy Framework and its supporting procedures.

All staff at HRP must be aware of the collection care responsibilities outlined in the Collections Management Policy Framework and make sure that they carry out their own work without detriment to any of the objects in our care and without compromise to this policy framework.

Our Cause

To help everyone explore the story of how monarchs and people have shaped society, in some of the greatest palaces ever built.

Principles

Our work is guided by four principles:

Guardianship

We exist for tomorrow, not just for yesterday. Our job is to give these palaces a future as valuable as their past. We know how precious they and their contents are, and we aim to conserve them to the standard they deserve: the best.

Discovery

We explain the bigger picture, and then encourage people to make their own discoveries, in particular, to find links with their own lives and with the world today

Showmanship

We do everything with panache. Palaces have always been places of spectacle, beauty, majesty and pageantry, and we are proud to continue that tradition.

Independence

We have a unique task, and our own point of view. We challenge ourselves to find new ways to do our work. We are an independent charity, not funded by the Government or the Crown, and we are keen to welcome everyone who can support our Cause.

Through these principles, we will keep these palaces alive, so that more and more people can explore their story, and find anchors that make the world a less uncertain place.

Strategic Aims

We have five major strategic aims with which to face the challenges of the future:

- Give the palaces the care they deserve
- Transform the way visitors explore their story
- Have wider impact in the world
- Build one organisation united behind our Cause
- Generate the money to make it all possible

4 Recording the HRP collection

Principles

The HRP collection includes both movable and immovable collection items. Information about the HRP collection and associated intellectual property is key to enabling access to the HRP collection.

The collection, which includes the HRP collection, objects under the care of the Royal Collection Trust and 'in-situ' at the HRP-managed palaces, and items that are on loan to HRP will be fully supported by systems of documentation that are maintained to equivalent high levels of care as the conservation care of the collection objects themselves.

We are committed to creating and maintaining good quality and up to date information about the HRP collection, which conforms to appropriate national and international standards wherever possible.

We aim to account for and enable access to all items for which we are legally responsible: our collection objects, loans to HRP, Royal Collection 'in-situ' objects, objects on deposit, un-acquisitioned and previously undocumented objects. Information must be available for inspection by HRP's auditors.

We are committed to ensuring that the Collections Management System is the primary tool for creating, holding and managing collection information and the objects for which we are legally responsible.

All staff responsible for collections management functions will keep abreast of best current practice and new technologies in documentation and use these as appropriate to widen public access to the HRP collection.

All staff responsible for inputting and maintaining collection documentation must receive training in the relevant data standards and appropriate Digital Asset Management Systems, to enable the accurate input and retrieval of collection information. All data shall be traceable through an audit trail as to who created or edited it.

In conjunction with the Royal Collection Trust we will maintain and develop an integrated Collections Management System, designed to current museum documentation standards. The security of the Collections Management System and back up procedures are provided by the Royal Collection Trust. Security and back up procedures for other digital collections management information are set out in the HRP Security Instructions.

We are committed to carrying out regular reviews of the Collections Management System to ensure it is fit for purpose and that collection information is appropriately safeguarded against potential future obsolescence of the system.

Any distinct special collection archives acquired or held as part of the HRP collection will be managed according to the Code of Practice on Archives for Museums and Galleries in the United Kingdom, Standing Conference on Archives and Museums (SCAM), 2002 e.d., and related national archive guidelines.

Certain object records may contain information with confidentiality or legal implications and anyone using such records must respect these. HRP collection records are covered by its Data Protection Policy, which conforms to the Data Protection Act, 1998.

Acquisitions

A record must be created for all objects added to the HRP collection describing each object, or group of objects, listing them by a unique identifying number. The curators are responsible for ensuring that this information is submitted to the Collections Management team for processing promptly.

An Accessions register is maintained by the Collections Management team recording the formal acceptance of items into the permanent collection. A digital record of this will be produced annually and stored according to HRP's Security Instructions for the storage of digital information.

Cataloguing

A catalogue record adhering to agreed HRP data standards should be created as soon as possible after the item has been accessioned. The history of each collection object and a record of any activities associated with the object must be kept. All collection documentation will be indexed and kept securely for the future by maintaining documentation in forms that remain useful to both staff and the public. Collection documentation will conform and relate to

HRP's policy on Fixed Assets, a Government requirement, and the SPECTRUM documentation standard, published by the Collections Trust.

Details of gaps and backlogs of documentation are maintained by the collections management team, where relevant. A plan to complete cataloguing gaps is in place and progressed as resources permit. Our policy is to have no long-term backlogs of essential collection documentation.

Location and movement control

Entry and exit documentation is maintained for all collection objects, or groups of objects, and other objects that we are legally responsible for. It records the source of the object, the terms of receipt and the location of the object.

Responsibility lies at different stages of the process with curators, conservators and collections managers. Responsibility is clearly outlined and explained in the Collections Management Procedures Manual.

The collections management team is responsible for carrying out 'spot' checks and audits to verify the physical presence of objects in locations as recorded on the Collections Management System. Comprehensive inventory checks will be carried out on a regular basis, with the aim of achieving good practice of maximum 3-5 year intervals for audits and annual cycles for 'spot' checks, according to the need for access to particular collections. Remedial action will be taken by the curator of the relevant collection following the identification of missing or wrongly-documented objects.

Daily spot checks of objects on display are carried out by the warding staff to check the physical presence of objects.

5 Staffing

Expert knowledge of the HRP collection and collections conservation is recognised as essential to its management and care, as well as to increase public education and enjoyment of it. It also provides staff with the authority and essential intellectual material with which to present the HRP collection within its palace context, in line with our Cause and Principles.

Staff will be recruited and provided with the training and opportunities necessary to develop a thorough knowledge of the area of the HRP collection for which they are responsible. However, HRP also recognises the role of Royal Collection Trust staff in researching and maintaining records on objects belonging to the Royal Collection, and will avoid duplicating effort in this area.

Collection research material will be organised according to HRP research guidelines and made accessible to colleagues, professional enquirers and to the public, with due acknowledgement where material is published or otherwise distributed. Research is included in individual curators' job descriptions and team work plans and to a lesser extent in some job profiles of conservators.

Support will be provided to staff responsible for collections management in obtaining appropriate academic, museum-related or technical qualifications and any further professional experience necessary, to carry out the activities identified in this policy. Collection staff are also encouraged to contribute to professional training and educational programmes at HRP.

All staff at HRP who work with the HRP collection will be given appropriate training on HRP's Collections Management approach and procedures. This will ensure that the highest standards are maintained and that all staff understand their responsibilities towards the HRP collection.



Appendix 1:

Legal, Ethical and Standards Framework

HRP's Collections Management Policy Framework is informed by legislation, ethical codes and appropriate sectoral standards.

A. Legislation applying to all Collections Management Policies

HRP's Royal Charter, 1998, as amended 2006

The Public Records Acts, 1958, as amended 1967

The Data Protection Act, 1998

The Freedom of Information Act, 2000

Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, UNESCO, 1970

The Requirements of HM Customs & Revenue

Copyright Act 1911 and 1956

Copyright and Related Rights Regulations, 2003

Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988

Dealing in Cultural Objects (Offences) Act, 2003

Disability Discrimination Act, 1995 (as amended)

Equality Act, 2006

Human Rights Act, 1998

Race Relations Act, 1976

Racial and Religious Hatred Act, 2006

Sex Discrimination Act, 1975

Health and Safety at Work Act, 1974

Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations, 1999

The Environmental Information Regulations, 2004

COSHH: Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations, 2002

The Treasure Act, 1996

B. Ethical codes applying to all Collections Management Policies

Code of Ethics for Museums, ICOM, 2006 (including the ICOM 'Red List')

Code of Ethics for Museums, Museums Association, 2008

Combating Illicit Trade: Due Diligence Guidelines for Museums, Libraries and Archives on collecting and borrowing Cultural Material, DCMS, 2005

DCMS Code of Practice Guidance for the Care of Human Remains in Museums, October 2005

UK Export Licensing for Cultural Goods – Procedures and guidance for exporters of works of art and other culture goods, DCMS, 1997

Statement of Principles issued by the National Museum Directors Conference on spoliation of works of art during the Holocaust and World War II period, 1998;

C. Sectoral standards applying to all Collections Management Policies

Spectrum: UK Museum Collections Management Standard

PAS197:2009: Code of practice for cultural collections management, BSi and Collections Trust

Accreditation Standard, Arts Council England, 2011

D. Memoranda of Understanding applying to all Collections Management Policies

MoU with The Royal Household, 2010

MoU with the Royal Armouries, 2010

MoU with the Royal Fusiliers Museum, 2010

MoU with the Chapel Royal HCP, 2011

MoU with the Royal Mint Museum, 2011

E. Collection Information Policy

Spectrum: UK Museum Collections Management Standard v0.4

ISAD(g): General International Standard Archival Description, International Council on Archives, 2007

Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules ('AACR', Joint Steering Committee, 2nd ed., 2002 revision): international library documentation standard. In process of supersession by Resource Description and Access ('RDA', 2010, revisions through 2013)

MARC ('machine-readable cataloguing') data standards (Library of Congress, 1999, revisions through 2013-)

Art and Architecture Thesaurus, The J.Paul Getty Trust

F. Collection Access Policy

Loans between National and Non-national Museums – New standard and practical guidelines, National Museum Directors' Conference, 2003

Display Case supplement, UK Registrars' Group

Standard Facilities Report, UK Registrars' Group

Standard Facilities Report Security Supplement, UK Registrars' Group

Government Indemnity Scheme Guidelines for Transport, July 2012.

G. Collection Care and Conservation Policy

PAS 198:2012 Specification for managing environmental conditions for cultural collections

Benchmarks in Collections Care for Museums, Archives and Libraries, 2007

Statement of Principles issued by the National Museum Directors Conference on environmental conditions for lending, 2010

'Bizot' Group Agreement: Achieving sustainability for galleries and museums, 2013

PD 5454:2012 Guide for the storage and exhibition of archival materials.

Codes of Ethics: ICOM-CC /ICON

Institute of Conservation's (ICON) Conservation Register 2013



Glossary

Accessioning: The process of formally recording the admission of a new object or group of objects into the collection.

Accession Register: A bound paper record of all objects which are, or have been, part of the organisation's permanent Collection.

Accreditation: The scheme administered by Arts Council England (ACE) which assigns accredited status to museums and organisations with collections management that meets the standards set out in ACE's publication: The Accreditation Standard.

Acquisition: The legal process of transferring ownership of an object from one person or organisation to another.

Agents of Decay: The ten ways in which a collection can be damaged include; thieves, vandals, displacers, fire, water, pests, contaminants, radiation (light), incorrect temperature or humidity and disassociation. The Framework for the Preservation of Museum Collections, published by the Canadian Conservation Institute, lists mitigating actions based on building features, portable fittings and procedures which can protect an object or collection.

Agents of Decay Strategy Board:

An HRP Board which meets biannually to steer collection risk management. It aims to reduce the probability and impact of physical and environmental risk to the collection, whilst balancing conservation and commercial use. Led by conservators, the Board is made up of senior staff from the curatorial team, surveyors, maintenance, visitor services and operations.

Archaeological archive: The objects, information, images, records and plans created through an archaeological excavation.

Cataloguing: The process of documenting an object on the Collections Management System.

CCC: Conservation and Collection Care, HRP's conservation team.

CM Team: Collections Management Team responsible to ensure we have governance policies and procedures in place for the management of the collection.

CMS: Collections Management System. HRP's collection database jointly managed with the Royal Collection Trust.

Collection access: Means of making use of, engaging with, communicating with or lending objects or information.

Collection development: Adding to, researching, reviewing and removing items from HRP's collections in accordance with our policies.

Collection information: Information and knowledge collected, created, held and maintained about an object, group of objects, events or activities associated with objects in the collection.

Collections management: The strategies, policies, processes and procedures related to collections development, information, access and care.

Collection risk management: The process of identifying and quantifying conservation-related risks to the collections; and planning and implementing mitigation measures to reduce those risks.

Conservation records: Reports and photographs recording the condition and treatments carried out on all objects, including testing of materials to be used in the treatment or display and any investigations relevant. Working notes, time and cost estimates and material lists are also part of these records.

Conservation science: The interdisciplinary research field encompassing all technological and scientific work that can benefit conservation.

De-accessioning: the process of formally removing an object from the collection.

Designated collection: A group of objects identified as a pre-eminent collection of national and international importance held in England's non-national museums, libraries and archives. The Designation Scheme is administered by Arts Council England (ACE).

Disposal: The legal process of removing an object from the collection – by destruction, transfer or sale.

Documentation: The information, images and records held about objects. It also refers to the process of creating the records.

Government Indemnity Scheme: A scheme under which the government is responsible for the payment of compensation, in the event of loss or damage to items which are on loan to a collections-holding organisation in the UK. Borrowing organisations do not have to pay any premiums under the scheme, but they are required to accept a minimum liability.

HRP: Historic Royal Palaces.

HRP collection: those items owned by Historic Royal Palaces and containing the permanent and support collections.

Handling collection: Objects intended for demonstration or handling which have not been accessioned and are not part of the permanent collection. Managed by the Learning & Engagement Team.

'In-situ': Objects managed by the Royal Collection Trust and displayed at an HRP-managed property in their original locations. Collection Care is managed according to a Memorandum of Understanding reviewed and renewed at regular intervals.

KPI: Key Performance Indicator – CCC has defined four KPIs for environmental risk management – relative humidity, visible light, ultraviolet light and dust.

Loan: An object (or a group of objects) belonging to another organisation or individual given to HRP for a fixed term subject to a separate contract, usually for display or exhibition purposes.

Loan Agreement: A contract between HRP and the owner detailing the terms and conditions of the loan which includes the fixed term period.

Object: An item which forms part of HRP's collection: permanent (recorded in the accession register); support; temporary (e.g. a loan); or those used for educational handling.

Object files: Paper filing system containing original documents related to permanent collection objects which complements and backs up the online database.

Permanent collection: Formally accessioned objects acquired by HRP in accordance with a written acquisition policy.

Preventive conservation: The mitigation of environmental, physical, chemical and biological risks to the collections and decorative interiors within HRP's care, informed by the Agents of Decay framework.

RCDC: Royal Ceremonial Dress Collection. A Designated collection formed of HRP owned and loan items managed by HRP.

Safeguarding: The process of planning and supervising an activity taking place in proximity to historic collections and/or interiors in order to prevent or reduce the risk of damage occurring as a result.

SOIE: State of the Interior Estate: an Excel-based survey tool that quantifies and prioritises conservation treatments for the entire collection in HRP's care, established in 2004.

Source: The owner or creator of an object prior to its addition to the collection.

Support collection: Objects which have not been accessioned and are not part of the permanent collection. Support collections may include replica or reproduction items, or objects acquired to supplement an exhibition.

The collection: Those items owned by HRP (permanent or support collections), under the care of the Royal Collection Trust and in situ at the HRP-managed palaces or on loan from the Royal Armouries, and many other lenders.

Top Ten conservation campaigns: A list of the top ten most vulnerable objects, exterior or interior decorative features in the collection, drawn up in 2006, and reported on annually to enable Trustees to monitor progress made in conserving the collection against the investment of staff and financial resource (£1.7m over ten years, excluding salary).

Transfer of Title: A legal term to describe the formal process of a change of ownership of an object from one person or organisation to another.

Treatment conservation: Treatments carried out on HRP and RC objects in the care of HRP. Textiles are conserved by in-house textile conservators while all other conservation treatments are commissioned externally.