BRITISH
COUNCIL

INTERNATIONAL MUSEUM ACADEMY MYANMAR

Toolkit:
Creating Collections
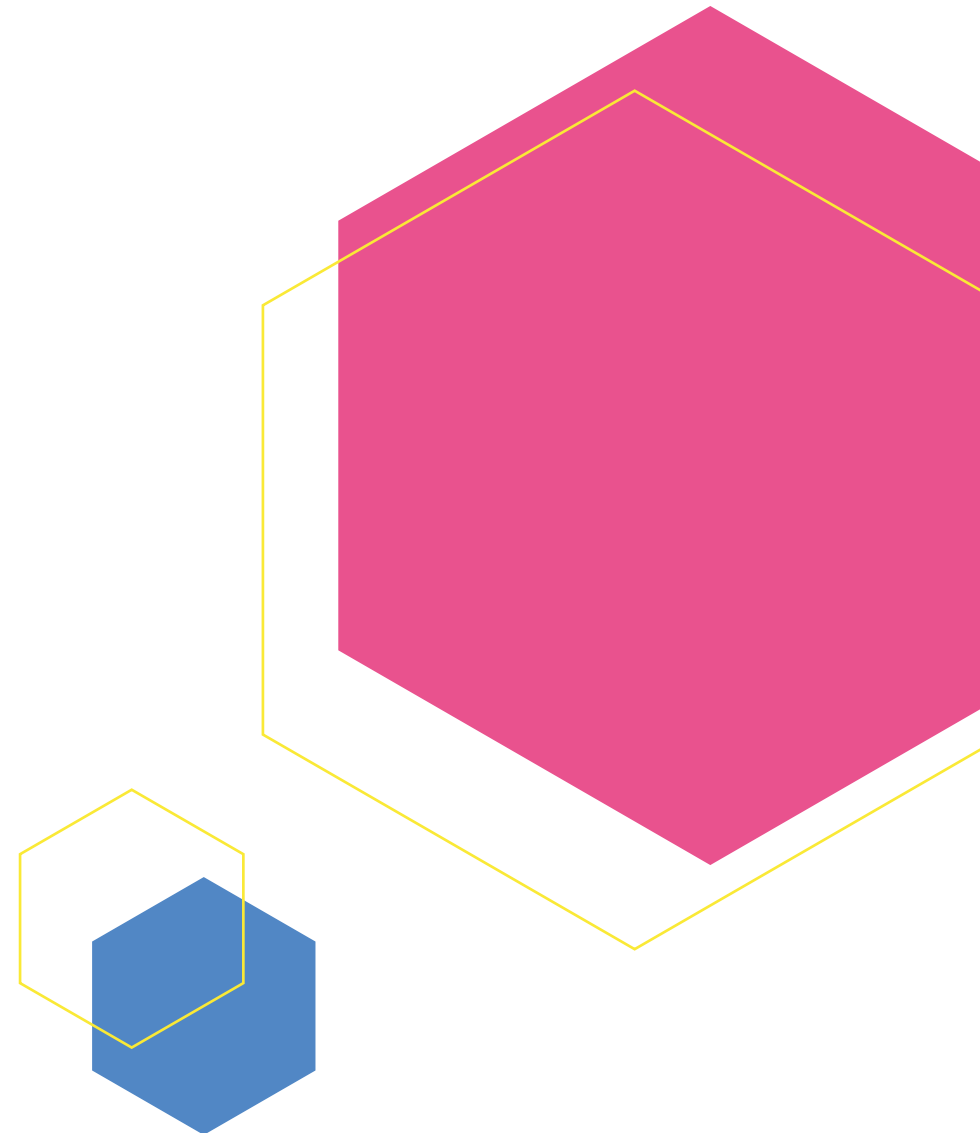Management Policies

Contents

01 Introduction

Museums in Myanmar hold some of the world's most beautiful and significant collections. They are treasure houses spanning the history of Myanmar and are a testament to the creativity and achievement of the people of the country.

This toolkit builds on the work of the Myanmar museum practitioners who attended the International Museum Academy Myanmar 2017 and 2018 – a series of workshops and seminars which explored the practice of museum collections management. IMA Myanmar is delivered by the British Council in partnership with UK museum professionals and supported by specialist museum professionals in Myanmar and the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture.

The principle that all collections management activity is driven by written policy decisions is central to good practice in collections management. Policies describe the principles the museum follows when delivering its mission and carries out its collections management activities. This proposition was fundamental to the learning that took place in IMAM 2017 and 2018.

The guidance in this toolkit is drawn from UK and international museum collections management standards and practice. It uses the ICOM Code of Ethics as a foundation. It also aims to respond to requests for practical guidance and examples when forming collections management policies from participants in IMAM 2017 and 2018.

02 What is 'collections management'?

Museums hold collections so that they can be used and enjoyed by the public. 'Collections management' is the term used to describe the policies, procedures and plans used by museums when they look after their collections and provide services using the collections to the public.

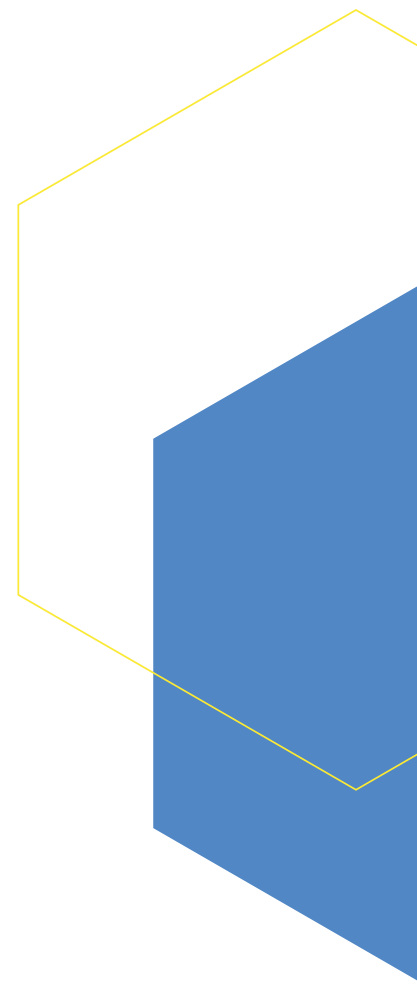Collections management is usually divided into 4 areas of museum activity:

You are managing your collections when you…

- Acquire a new object
- Change the location of an object
- Update the location of an object in your records
- Clean a storage area
- Lend an object to another museum
- Organise an exhibition
- Post an image of an object on facebook
- Assess the condition of an object

1. **Collections development** – collecting new objects, reviewing the existing collection and removing objects

2. **Collection care** – the activities carried out in the museum which safeguard the collections for the long term

3. **Collections information** – the information about the collection that the museum collects and maintains. In museums this information is called 'documentation'

4. **Collections access** – the ways that the museum provides access to collections e.g. exhibitions, workshops, websites, facebook

All collections management activity in a museum should be governed by written policies. Policies describe the principles that the museum follows when it carries out collections management activities (often called 'procedures'). Policies always relate to a museum's mission (sometimes called 'purpose'). There is a direct link between mission, policy, and your museum procedures. Does your museum have a mission statement? If not, you will need to create one before starting to create your collections management policies.

Mission and policy are always approved by the museum's governing body or top management. This shows their commitment to the museum's strategic direction and the way that it is working. Procedures are not generally approved by the governing body or top management; however they are always guided by the principles described in the museum's policies.

Mission

A short written statement describing the purpose of the museum. The mission should include reference to the collections and the museum's commitment to safeguarding them.

Collections management policies

Written statements which describe how the museum works to deliver its mission. Policies refer to collections management ethics, standards (such as Spectrum and Benchmarks), relevant legal codes and principles that are specific to the museum.

Collections management procedures

The activities (procedures) that the museum carries out when managing the collection. These procedures must follow the principles described in the museum's policies. For examples of procedures see the IMA Myanmar Information Management Toolkit.

Procedures are often written down in Procedural Manuals

03 Why do we need policies to manage our collections and which ones do we need?

01 02 **03** 04 05 06 07 08 09 10 11 12 13

Policies provide a link between the museum's mission statement and its collections management procedures. Written policies are an opportunity for a museum to describe the principles, ethical codes, laws and standards that it uses when managing the collection. If a museum is carrying out collections management procedures without referring to any policy decisions there is a danger that:

- Their procedures will be inconsistent
- Museum standards will not be applied
- Laws and ethical codes may be broken
- Resources will be wasted in carrying out unnecessary activities

Policies which describe how a museum manages its collection may be contained in a single document, often called a 'collections management policy'. However more often, especially for larger museums, policy statements are split into four separate documents, one for each of the 4 collections management areas:

1. **Collections development policy** (often called an acquisition and disposal policy)

2. **Collections care and conservation policy**

3. **Collections information policy, usually called a documentation policy**

4. **Collections access policy**

In addition if a museum lends and/or borrows objects they will also have a:

5. **Loans in policy** (i.e. a policy for borrowing)

6. **Loans out policy** (i.e. a policy for lending)
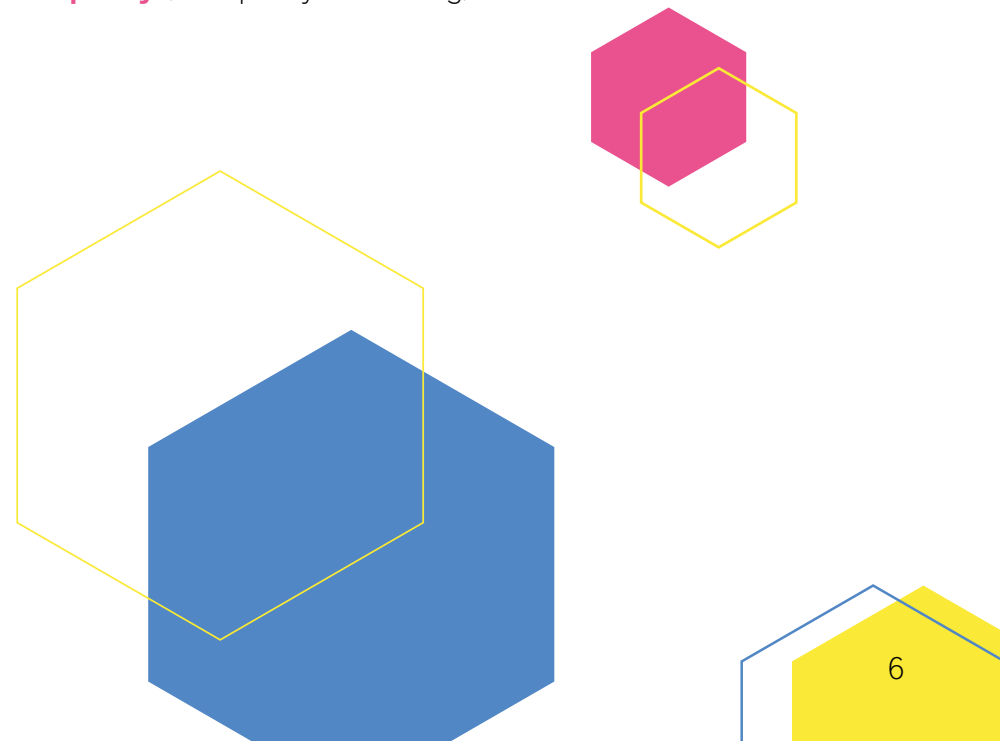
Collections acquisition and disposal

Museums need a written document which describes how they develop their collections. This will describe the principles they follow when they collect and dispose of objects and may be called an **acquisition and disposal policy** or a **collections development policy**.

Collections care

Museums need a written document which describes how they care for their collections.

This is usually called a **collections care and conservation policy** and describes the principles the museum follows when caring for and conserving the collection.

Collections information

Museums need a written document which describes how they manage the information they hold about their collections.

This is usually called a **documentation policy** and describes the principles the museum follows when documenting the collection.

Collections access

Museums need a written document which describes how they provide access to their collections.

This is usually called a **collections access policy** and describes the principles the museum follows when providing access to the collection.

All collections management policies are different because they reflect the individual mission and circumstances of each museum.

Museum policies are:

- Written descriptions of the direction principles and standards of a museum regarding a particular area of activity

- Signed off by the museum's governing body or top management to show their commitment to the way the museum is working

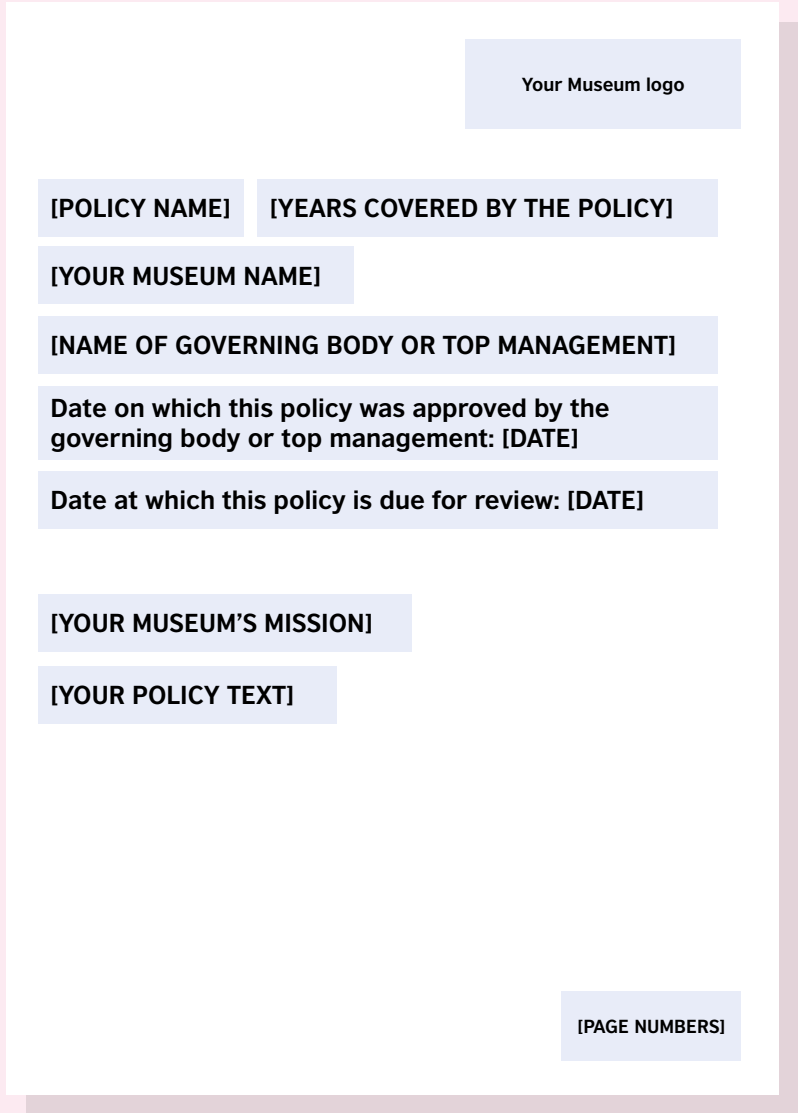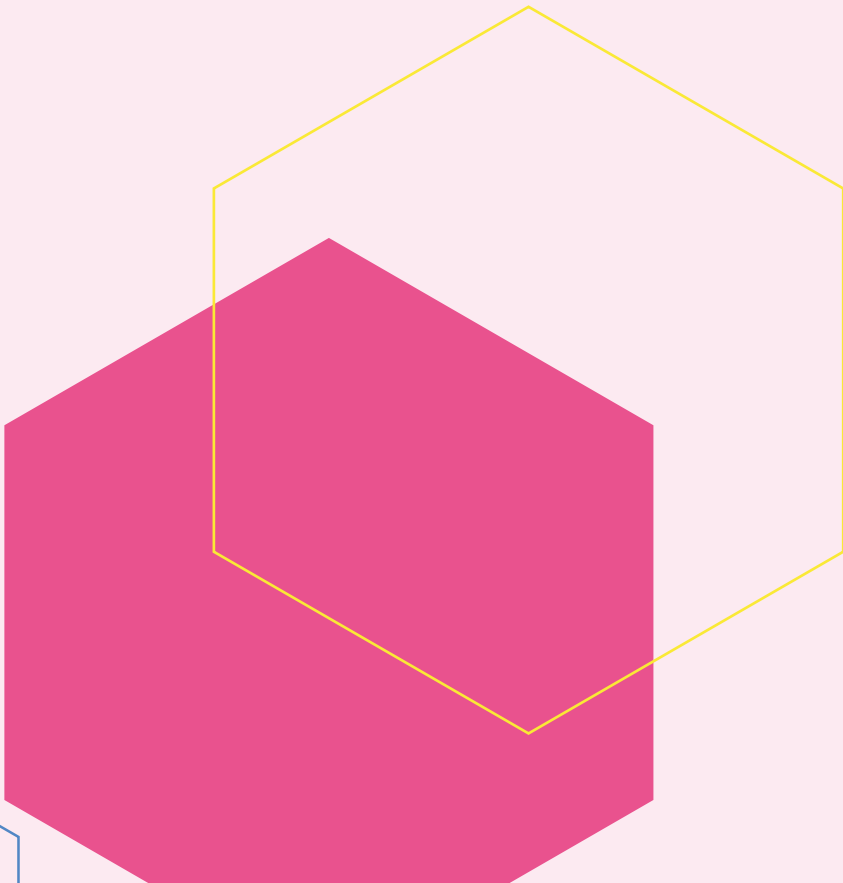- Reviewed regularly by the governing body/top management. Most policies are reviewed every 3–5 years.

It is common for policies to be available for all staff and often to the public.

The language used in policies suggests future intentions and aspiration. They include phrases like – 'The museum will... ', 'We aim to... ', 'The museum is committed to... ', 'We will continue to... , 'We will be guided by... '

Museum policies do not:

- Give details of activities you are going to carry out in the future (e.g. reorganising the stores) – these belong in written project plans

- Give details of how you work (e.g. how you accession objects) – these belong in written procedures

It is a good idea for every museum to create a format that they will use for all of their policies, so that they all look the same. The example below suggests elements that most museums include in their policies; it can be adapted to suit the needs of your museum.

Your Museum logo

[POLICY NAME]   [YEARS COVERED BY THE POLICY]

[YOUR MUSEUM NAME]

[NAME OF GOVERNING BODY OR TOP MANAGEMENT]

Date on which this policy was approved by the governing body or top management: [DATE]

Date at which this policy is due for review: [DATE]

[YOUR MUSEUM'S MISSION]

[YOUR POLICY TEXT]

[PAGE NUMBERS]

When you are working on your museum's collections management policies it's a good idea to look at examples of policies from other museums. You may know a museum that already has policies, in which case you can ask to see them. Also, museums all over the world have published their policies on the internet.

Looking at examples of other policies will prompt you to think about new aspects of your policy that you have perhaps not thought about before. However, when you do this don't be tempted to copy and paste policy decisions from other museums. There is no 'right' or 'wrong' in a policy; try to describe your museum as it is, and then, if necessary, commit to improving in a separate plan. Remember that every museum is different and their policy decisions will depend on:

- Their mission
- Their collection and its use
- The resources they have available to manage and use the collection
- The collections management standards they are using
- Their legal and ethical obligations

Examples of collections management policies from other museums

As you read these polices notice how the museums have made them relvant to their own circumstances:

Acquisition and Disposal Policy – see the National Motor Museum Trust Collections Development Policy (a term often used in the UK to describe an Acquisition and Disposal policy) at:
https://nationalmotormuseum.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/NMMT_CollectionsDevelopmentPolicy.pdf

Collections Care Policy – see Falkirk Community Trust's policy at:
http://www.falkirkcommunitytrust.org/heritage/archives/docs/preserve/Care_and_Conservation_Policy.pdf
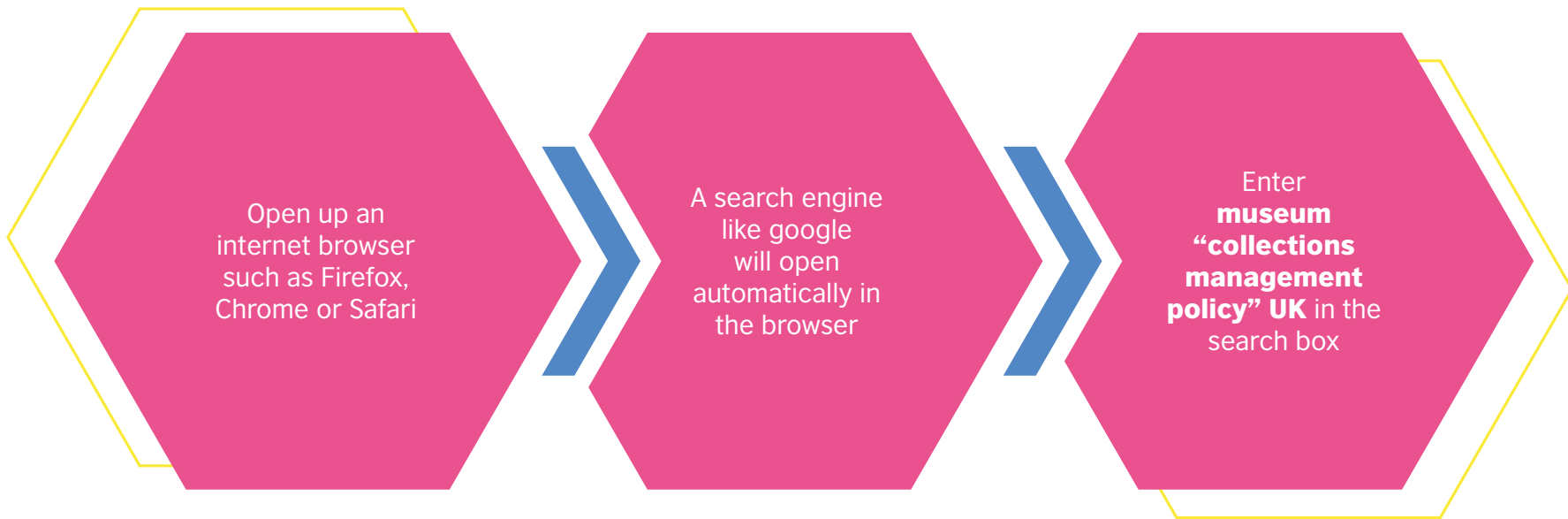
Documentation Policy – see the Jewish Museum policy at:
https://jewishmuseum.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Documentation_Policy_2013.pdf

Access Policy – see Salisbury Museum's policy at:
https://salisburymuseum.org.uk/documents/policies-guidelines/access-policy-statement

Loans out policy – see Liverpool Museums Outward Loans Policy at:
https://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/about/tours-loans/Outward-Loans-Policy.pdf

Loans in policy – see National Museum of Wales Inward Loans Policy at:
https://museum.wales/media/43051/7-Inward-Loan-Policy-2016.pdf

How to find more examples of policies from other museums on the internet:

Open up an internet browser such as Firefox, Chrome or Safari

A search engine like google will open automatically in the browser

Enter museum **"collections management policy" UK** in the search box

06 How to create collections management policies

Step 1. First steps

- Read this toolkit
- Think about your museum's mission. If you don't have one you will need to speak to your governing body or top management about what it might be. You need to have a mission statement before you write your collections management policies.
- Think about why museums need policies
- Read collections management policies from other museums (see section 5). Notice how they are all different and relate specifically to the museum's own circumstances.

Step 2. Talk to your colleagues and managers about the importance of collections management policies. Make the case for improving the services you offer to the public by making policy decisions.

- Give copies of this toolkit to your colleagues and managers
- Who will need to approve your policy? Discuss what you are doing with them.

Step 3. Set up a working group

- Policy decisions need to be discussed and agreed by everyone in your museum. Identify a group of people (a 'working group') from your museum who want to work with you on drafting a policy.
- Set a date for your first meeting.

Step 4. Hold your first working group meeting

- At your meeting, decide which policies you are going to draft and in what order. It is probably best to start with your acquisition and disposal policy. If you are not in a position to lend or borrow objects you do not need loans policies.
- Policy making requires thought, so be prepared to explore and discuss issues.
- Create a timeline for your policy making project. Who will manage the project? How are you going to draft your policies? How often will you all meet? How will you keep your managers informed?

Step 5. Draft your policy

- Create the format that you will use for all of your museum's collections management policies (see section 4).

- Using the framework for the policy you are working on, (see sections 7, 8, 9, 20,11,12) discuss each of the bold headings in the framework and shape the text you might want to appear under that heading in your policy. The text in italics in the frameworks gives you examples of policy decisions made by real museums. Sometimes you can copy and paste text from other museums into your own policies, but be careful when you do this – the policy decisions you make need to support *you* to work with *your* collection.

- When you are shaping your text under each heading think about what your museum is doing at the moment. If you do not meet good standards, you can make a policy decision to aim to meet higher standards in the future and make a separate plan about how you are going to improve.

- Generally, the headings in each of the frameworks should be included in your policy. You can add further headings if necessary for your collection.

Step 6. Get approval for your policy

- Your policy will need to be formally adopted by your museum. What do you need to do to make this happen?

- Be prepared to discuss the policy decisions you drafted in Step 5. With the person/people who is/are signing off the policy.

Step 7. Use and share your policy

- You need to make sure that everyone in your museum understands how your policy affects their work. Make sure it is available to all staff. You can put it on a staff notice board or on desks or add it to your Procedural Manual.

- Always refer to the decisions you have made in your policy when you are improving your procedures

- Use your policy in staff training

- Use your policy in the induction of new staff

- Many museums publish their policies on their websites. They can be a very useful way of letting the public know how your museum works.

Step 8. Keep your policy alive

- Review your policy regularly. Every time it is reviewed make sure that the revised policy is approved and shared with all staff.

- Policies and procedures do change and improve. Many museums hold regular collections management meetings where they discuss how they want to improve their policies and procedures.

- Sometimes several museums meet up to discuss how ethical codes, laws and standards influence and underpin their policies.

In this section you can explore what might be in your museum's acquisition and disposal policy.

- Each heading in **bold** should be discussed with your colleagues as you shape and write your museum's acquisition and disposal policy.

- Text in *italics* gives you example text from a typical acquisition and disposal policy.

- Remember to put your text into the template format from **section 4.**

1. The aim of this policy

Example text:

- *The aim of this policy is to set out the terms under which [museum name] will acquire new objects for the collections and dispose of objects from the collections.*

- *Decisions by [museum name] to acquire and dispose of objects are always made in the context of this policy. Final approval for acquisitions and disposal are made by [job title/ name of body].*

- *[Museum name] will only acquire objects outside this policy in exceptional circumstances.*

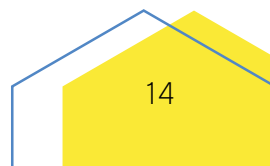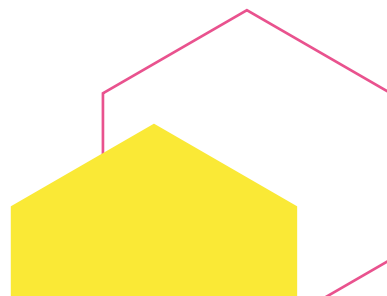## 2. A description of the history of our collections

These descriptions are usually very detailed; see examples of policies from other museums (see **section 4**). When writing your description think about how your collection was created. Do you know when it was started? Were influential figures (collectors, donors) or organisations connected to the creation of the collection? Are there important themes or dates in the history of the collection?

3. A description of our current collections.

These descriptions are usually very detailed; see examples of policies from other museums (see **section 4**).

Describe your collection. You may want to divide it into 'types' e.g. 'archaeology' or 'art' or it may be that it is a single collection e.g. the contents of a house. Describe the collection, its size (approximately) the dates and geography it covers, its significance – why is it important? Why have you acquired it?

Also describe your support collections (i.e. non-accessioned collections, such as handling collections). Describe them, their size and how they are used.

4. A statement about our themes and priorities for future collecting.

These descriptions can be very detailed; see examples of policies from other museums (see **section 4**).

Why does your museum exist (refer to your mission) and how will you develop your collection in the future? If you are not actively collecting at the moment, say so here.

Although objects you borrow are not accessioned, they are managed as part of your collections while they are in your museum. If your museum does not borrow objects say so here. If you *do* borrow objects you will need a separate loans in policy.

Some types of collection require very specific standards of care and use – are there categories of objects that you will *not* acquire? (e.g. natural history specimens, archaeology, human remains).

5. A statement about our themes and priorities for review and disposal?

These descriptions can be very detailed; see examples of policies from other museums (see **section 4**).

Are there areas of your collection that do not meet your mission statement? Do you intend to review parts of your collection in the future and dispose of some of it? If you do not intend to do this, and only intend to dispose for curatorial reasons (i.e. for legal, safety or conservation reasons), say so here.

6. A statement about the ethical codes and laws we comply with when acquiring or disposing.

Museums only collect and dispose within legal and ethical frameworks. It is good practice to include relevant codes and laws in your policy.

Example text:

[Museum name] is committed to complying with all relevant ethics and laws when acquiring and disposing of objects, including:

- *ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums 2004*

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

- *Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, CITES, 1973*

- *[list relevant Myanmar laws relating to ownership of collections; stolen cultural property; preventing trade in endangered species]*

- *[list relevant Myanmar laws relating to intellectual property and data protection laws]*

- *[list relevant Myanmar laws relating to acquisition, storage, use and disposal of human bodies, organs and tissue]*

7. The principles we follow when we acquire objects

This section contains statements about the principles which your museum follows when you acquire objects. You do not have to follow the example text below, but it is recommended.

Example text:

- *'[museum name] will not acquire any object by purchase, gift, loan, bequest, or exchange unless we are satisfied that a valid title is held. We will reject any objects that have been illicitly traded.*

- *Before acquisition [museum name] will establish the full history of an object, as far possible. We are committed to establishing that any object offered to us has not been illegally obtained in, or exported from its country of origin or any intermediate country in which it might have been owned legally (including the museum's own country).*

- *[museum name] will not acquire objects where there is reasonable cause to believe their recovery involved unauthorised or unscientific fieldwork, or intentional destruction or damage of monuments, archaeological or geological sites, or of species and natural habitats.*

- *When acquiring objects we recognise our responsibility to ensure that care, documentation and use of collections will meet high standards. We use the Spectrum Primary Procedures as described in the Information Management Toolkit to document our collections. We will take into account limitations on collecting imposed by factors such as staffing, storage and care of collection.*

8. The principles we follow when we dispose of objects

This section contains statements about the principles which your museum follows when you dispose of objects. You do not have to follow the example text below, but it is recommended if you dispose or intend to dispose, of objects.

Example text:

- *[Museum name] aims to review and dispose of objects through a formal review process before disposal. The outcome of review and any subsequent disposal will not reduce the quality or significance of the collection and will result in a more useable, well managed collection.*

- *The review and disposal process will be documented, open and transparent.*

- *All disposals will be fully documented, using the Spectrum Primary Procedures.*

- *The governing body will confirm that it is legally free to dispose of an item. Agreements on disposal made with donors will also be taken into account.*

- *The method of disposal may be by gift, sale, exchange or as a last resort, destruction.*

In the UK, museums would also add:

- *The museum will not dispose of objects for financial reasons.*

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In this section you can explore what might be in your museum's collections care and conservation policy.

- Each heading in **bold** should be discussed with your colleagues as you shape and write your museum's collections care and conservation policy.

- Text in *italics* gives you example text from a typical collections care and conservation policy.

- Remember to put your text into the template format from **section 4.**

- There may be areas in this policy where your museum is currently unable to meet some standards of collections care (e.g. you may not have the resources to monitor pests). In this case we suggest that you state your aim e.g. [Museum name] is working towards monitoring insect pests throughout the building. How you are going to achieve this should then be described in a Collections Care Plan.

1. The aim of this policy.

Example text:

The aim of this policy is to provide a summary of the principles which guide us when we conserve and care for our collections. We are guided by this policy when we create collections care plans and carry out collections care procedures.

2. Our definition of the term 'collections care'.

Many museums include a standard definition of collections care which is drawn from the UK Accreditation Standard. This definition helps to set out the clear differences between preventive and remedial (or restoration) conservation and the skills needed to carry them out. We suggest that this definition is pasted into your policy.

Example text:

'Collections care' is a fundamental duty for all museums. At [museum name] we use the term to describe the preventive and remedial conservation measures which we carry out to ensure the long-term preservation of the collection.

- *'Preventive conservation' covers activities which slow down or minimise deterioration of museum objects and specimens and structures e.g. environmental monitoring and control*

- *'Remedial or restoration conservation' involves a specialised treatment carried out on an object to bring it to a more acceptable condition or state in order to stabilise it or enhance some aspects of its cultural or scientific value e.g. restoration of an oil painting*

3. The ethical codes and laws we comply with when we are caring for our collections.

Your policy should state your commitment to any relevant ethical guidelines or legislation that guide this area of museum work.

Example text:

[Museum name] aims to comply with the following codes and laws when caring for our collection:

- *ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums 2004*
- *[List relevant Myanmar laws relating to Health and Safety at Work]*

4. The standards we use when we care for our collections.

There are many standards used internationally in collections care. It is probably simplest to be guided by Benchmarks in Collections Care (see section 13) which will help you to describe the collections care levels you meet at the moment. You may decide that your museum does not need to improve on those levels, but if it does you can describe how you will improve in a separate plan. The Benchmarks chapter on Storage has been translated into Burmese.

Example text:

At [museum name] we use Benchmarks in Collections Care to guide us in the care of our collection by carrying out annual Benchmarks assessments.

5. The principles that guide us when we carry out preventive conservation

It is useful to follow the Benchmarks chapter headings when describing your preventative conservation principles. The relevant headings are: buildings; storage; housekeeping; handling and use of objects; environmental monitoring and control, and replicas.

Example text:

Our buildings
How do you maintain your buildings? Do you carryout regular checks to monitor security and maintenance? Who carries out building checks? Do you have any alarm systems, such as intruder and fire alarms? Are they checked regularly?

Our storage
Where do you store objects that are not on display? Do you use special materials to wrap or pack objects in store?

Our housekeeping
Do you have regular cleaning schedules for all storage and display areas? Are your cleaners trained in areas that they can and cannot clean? Do they look out for pest problems?

How we handle objects.
Who is allowed to handle and move objects? Are they trained so that objects are not damaged? Do you use special equipment such as trolleys and gloves?

How we use objects

Do you carry out condition checks before objects are used (i.e. before display or loan). Do you use labelling and marking techniques that don't damage objects when you are applying accession numbers to objects?

Environmental monitoring and control

Do you monitor the environment (e.g. temperature/relative humidity/light/pests) in your museum, so that you know if conditions are damaging your objects? If you do, how do you do it, who does it and when? Do you use any special equipment to control your environment, such as UV filters on windows?

Replicas

Do you create replicas in cases where original objects are unsuitable for use?

6. The principles that guide us when we carry out remedial conservation.

Remedial or restorative conservation should only be carried out by qualified conservators.

Example text:

The [museum name] will seek the expertise of a qualified conservator for any planned remedial conservation work. All conservators will provide full written and photographic records of work undertaken.
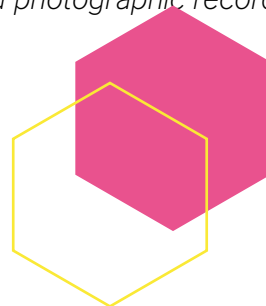
7. Our commitment to improving our collections care

Do you have plans to improve your collections care? Many museum use Benchmarks in Collections Care to assess their current levels of care and decide how they want to improve.

Example text:

We plan improvements to our collections care (see our Collections Care Plan) using our annual Benchmarks assessment, the environmental data we collect and our regular risk assessments. Our plans are described in our Collections Care Plan.

8. Our commitment to planning for emergencies

Do you assess risks to your collection (e.g. fire, flood, earthquake)? Do you have plans about how you will protect or salvage your collections if any of those risks occur?

Example text:

We carry out annual assessments of risks to the collection and have a current emergency plan (see our Emergency Plan) based on the outcome of the most recent assessment.

9. Our commitment to training our workforce in collections care

Example text:

At [museum name] we hold regular collections care training for all staff based on the principles in this policy and our collections care procedures.

In this section you can explore what might be in your museum's documentation policy.

- Each heading in **bold** should be discussed with your colleagues as you shape and write your museum's documentation policy.

- Text in *italics* gives you example text from a typical documentation policy.

- Remember to put your text into the template format from **section 4.**

- There may be areas in this policy where your museum is currently unable to meet some documentation standards (e.g. you may not have the Spectrum Primary Procedures in place). In this case we suggest that you make statements about improvement e.g. under 5 below you might say: [Museum name] is working towards implementing the Spectrum Primary Procedures. How you will do this should then be described in a Documentation Plan.

1. The aim of this policy.

Every museum has information about its collection. In a documentation policy museums make statements about the information they will collect and how they will keep it safe. Documentation policies should always state the museum's commitment to collecting 'core information' about its objects. See the Information Management Toolkit for more about 'core information' and accountability.

Example text:

The aim of this policy is to ensure that the [museum name] fulfils its responsibilities in relation to management and access to collections information, and security of information. Through implementing this policy we aim to:

- *Improve the accountability of collections*

- *Maintain minimum professional standards of in our information systems, and where possible meet higher standards*

- *Extend access to collections information*

- *Strengthen the security of our collections information*

- *We are guided by this policy when we create documentation plans and carry out documentation procedures.*

2. How we define the term 'collections documentation'.

Most museums define 'documentation' using this text from Spectrum and the Information Management Toolkit:

Collections documentation is defined as all of the recorded information that [museum name] holds about the collection for which it is legally responsible. 'Collections documentation' includes:

- Information about the historical context of the object such as who gave it to the museum.
- Information about the management of an object such as where it is kept.
- Information about the object itself such as material or format

3. Our commitment to the documentation of our collections

Most museum make a commitment to documenting their collections.

Example text:

[Museum name] is committed to capturing, maintaining and keeping the documentation about our collections safe, as well as providing access to our documentation, where appropriate, for users.

4. Our commitment to accountability for our collections.

The primary aim of museum documentation is to be accountable to the collections; most museums make a commitment to accountability.

Example text:

[Museum name] is committed to being accountable for our collections. We do this by maintaining 'core information' about each object, which allows us to identify and locate all objects, or groups of objects. Core information is:

- *Object number*
- *Object name*
- *Object description*
- *The number of objects if a group*
- *Object location*
- *Owner/donor/seller details*
- *Recorder name and date*
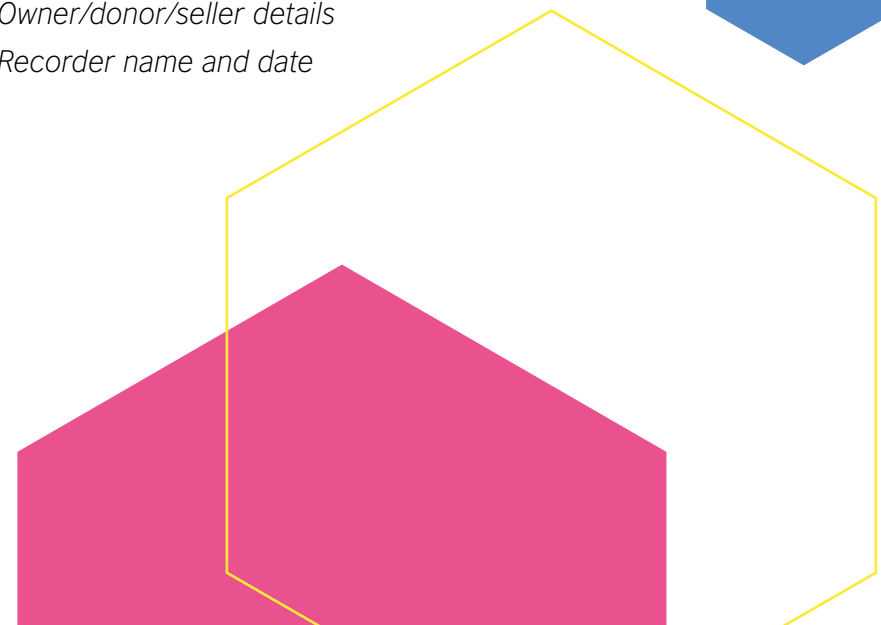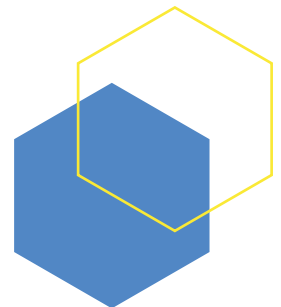
5. **The standards we follow in our documentation.**

Most museums follow the Spectrum standard when documenting their collection. This standard is described in the Information Management Toolkit.

Example text:

In our documentation we aim to meet the minimum standards for the Spectrum Primary Procedures, which are:

- *Object entry procedure*
- *Acquisition procedure*
- *Cataloguing procedure*
- *Location and movement control procedure*
- *Loans in procedure*
- *Loans out procedure*
- *Object exit procedure*
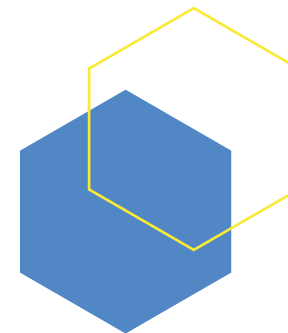- *Retrospective documentation procedure*

6. **The ethical codes and laws we comply with in our documentation.**

You will already have referred to some ethical codes in your acquisition and disposal policy. Most museums would restate those codes here and also think about any other local laws that might be relevant to ownership of property.

Example text:

When documenting our collections information [museum name] aims to be guided by relevant ethical guidelines and comply with relevant legislation, including:

- *ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums 2004*
- *UNESCO 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property.*
- *Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, CITES, 1973*
- *Relevant Myanmar laws [here you might list laws relating to ownership of property; transferring ownership; data protection]*

7. Our commitment to keeping a documentation procedural manual.

Example text:

[Museum name] is committed to maintaining a documentation procedural manual which records the following for each of the Spectrum Primary Procedures:

- *Which posts are responsible for each procedure; which post keeps the manual up to date*

- *A workflow for each procedure illustrating how it works in our museum*

- *Examples of completed records/forms/agreements used for each procedure*

- *Information about where records are located and kept in the museum*

- *Information about how Acquisition and Cataloguing records are backed up*

8. Our commitment to the ongoing improvement of our documentation.

If your current documentation does not support you to account for your collections, you need to commit to improving it in a documentation plan.

Example text:

[Museum name] is committed to maintaining 'core information' for all objects for which we are responsible. Where we do not have core information, we have a Documentation Plan which describes how we will meet those standards.

9. How we keep our documentation safe.

Do you have back-up copies of your accession registers and catalogue records?

Example text:

We are committed to keeping our records safe, including regular back-ups of our accession registers (by photocopying) and catalogue records (by back up digital copies).

In this section you can explore what might be in your museum's collections access policy.

- Each heading in **bold** should be discussed with your colleagues as you shape and write your museum's access policy.
- Text in *italics* gives you example text from a typical access policy.
- Remember to put your text into the template format from **section 4.**

1.The aim of this policy

Example text:

The aim of this policy is to ensure that the [museum name] fulfils its responsibilities to provide access to its collections for all of its users.

We are guided by this policy when we create access plans and carry out access procedures.

2. Our definition of 'collections access'.

Many museums define 'collections access' using text taken from PAS 197: 2009 Code of practice for cultural collections management.

Example text:

We define 'collections access' as content and services which give people physical, sensory and intellectual access to our collection

and collections information. This policy sets out our commitment to giving everyone access to our collections, collections information and services.

3. The ethical codes and laws we comply with when providing access to our collections.

There will be ethical codes and laws which will impact on your access policy.

Example text:

When providing access to our collections information and collections information we aim to comply with all relevant ethical codes and laws, including:

- *ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums 2004*
- *UNESCO 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property.*
- *Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, CITES, 1973*
- *[List relevant Myanmar laws relating to Health and Safety at Work]*
- *Relevant Myanmar laws [here you might list laws relating to providing physical access to buildings for people with disabilities; data protection]*

4. How we help people to access our collections and collections information.

Many museums define how they help people to access collections using text and terms taken from a standard called PAS 197: 2009 Code of practice for cultural collections management. Also look at the ICOM Code of Ethics which states that the museum 'should ensure that the museum and its collections are available to all during reasonable hours and for regular periods. Particular regard should be given to those persons with special needs.' This section in your policy will probably involve much discussion with your colleagues. You will want to balance the access needs of some people with the need to preserve your collection and the resources that you have available.

Some museums decide that they cannot lend their objects to other museum – that decision can be recorded under this section.

Example text:

At [museum name] we are committed to providing the widest possible access to our collections and services so that people from all sections of the community can enjoy the use of our collections and collections information. We understand that people have differing abilities and will want to access our collections in different ways. It is our policy to support everyone to access our collections as widely as possible and we do this in the following ways:

- *Collections access is an important part of our planning process; when we are planning a new exhibition we will take into account the access needs of our audiences.*

- *We will always balance access to our collections with the need to preserve our collections for the long term.*

- *We aim to make sure that the museum environment is welcoming to visitors from all sections of the community.*

- *We aim to enable people with physical disabilities to access every part of our collections, services and building. We take into account the needs of the elderly and people caring for children.*

- *We aim to enable people with impaired vision or hearing to enjoy our collections, building and services.*

- *We aim to provide interpretation in a range of learning styles. We also aim to ensure people with learning difficulties can engage with and enjoy all of our services.*

- *We consider the needs of people for whom Burmese is not a first language, or whose knowledge of Burmese history and culture is limited.*
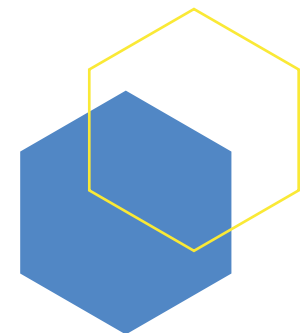
5. How we provide access to our collections

Here you can list all of the ways that you currently provide access to your collections.

Example text:

We currently provide access to our collections and collections information in the following ways:

- *Exhibitions and interpretation*
- *Social media – Facebook and twitter*
- *Replicas*
- *Lending objects*
- *Publications*
- *Hearing support system*
- *Schools programme*
- *Lifts to all floors*

6. How we find out about our audiences and their needs

If you want to improve access to your collections you will need to find out more about the people who use, or want to use, your collections and services. For small museums this might be a matter of asking for comments in your visitor book and then feeding visitor feedback into your planning for future events and exhibitions. For larger museums this might be data collection and audience analysis programmes.

Example text:

- *We maintain a visitor book where visitors leave comments about the museum.*

- *We work with local schools to build schools programmes that fit with their curriculum*

- *We feed all audience feedback into the development of our programmes and services.*

We are committed to understanding more about our users, so that we can meet their needs and provide access to our collections and services. We review the data we collect from our users and improve our services. How we do this is described in our Access Plan.

7. Collections where we have to restrict access

You may need to restrict access to some parts of your collections for example, for cultural or legal reasons, or if objects have particular environmental needs. Where collections are restricted you may aim to provide access in other ways, for example through photographs or replicas.

Example text:

[Museum name] acknowledges that access to collections needs to be balanced with collections care, cultural sensitivities and in some case legal or ethical considerations. We have to restrict access to the following parts of our collection:

- *Collection x, which is largely paper based, is very fragile and light sensitive. We are undertaking a programme of digitisation for this collection. In the meantime it is accessible by appointment.*

In this section you can explore what might be in your museum's loans in policy. 'Loans in' is the Spectrum term used in the Information Management Toolkit to describe objects that are borrowed by your museum, usually from other museums.

- Each heading in **bold** should be discussed with your colleagues as you shape and write your museum's loans in policy.

- Text in *italics* gives you example text from a typical loans in policy.

- Remember to put your text into the template format from **section 4.**

Before you start you need to decide if your museum is in a position to borrow objects. Study the areas for discussion below and the examples from typical loans policies. If you do not think that your museum is in a position to meet the standards described, then you need to make a policy decision that your museum will not borrow objects and you will not need to write a loans in policy. Record your museums decision not to borrow objects under heading number 4 in your acquisition and disposal policy.

1. The aim of this policy

Example text:

The aim of this policy is to set out the terms under which [museum name] borrows objects. The policy describes how we are accountable for the objects we borrow and how we care for them.

2. Why our museum borrows objects.

Discuss why your museums might borrow objects. It is good practice to only borrow objects for specific purposes (e.g. for an exhibition) and for reasons which support your mission statement.

Example text:

[Museum name] will only borrow objects for specified reasons, for example to support a temporary exhibition. We will only consider borrowing objects for use in our permanent exhibitions in exceptional circumstances and after every effort has been made to secure an acquisition.

3. Who we borrow from.

Most museums would not borrow objects from private individuals, and will in most circumstances only borrow from other museums or in some cases from non-museum organisations.

Example text:

We will normally only borrow from other museums; occasionally we might borrow from an individual.

4. The duration of the loan.

It is good practice to agree loans for a fixed period, and never agree a 'permanent' or 'indefinite' loan. Loans are usually not agreed for a period longer than 3–5 years, although they can be renegotiated after that term has ended.

Example text:

[Museum name] will only borrow objects for agreed periods. This will be for no longer than three years in the first instance, but may be reviewed and renewed after that period has expired.

5. The ethical codes and laws issues we will comply with when agreeing to borrow an object.

Example text:

When we borrow objects we will comply with:

- *ICOM Code of Ethics for Museum 2004 (see 1.8; 2.2; 2.3)*

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

- *Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, CITES, 1973*

- *Any relevant Myanmar laws relating to ownership of cultural property*

We will not proceed with a loan in if we believe that:

- *The lender is not the owner and/or is not legitimately entitled to lend the object. We will carry out due diligence checks concerning the provenance of all objects we borrow.*

- *The object is stolen, illegally exported or illegally imported*

- *Borrowing the object will contravene any relevant laws*

6. The standards of care we will give to objects we borrow.

Here you will need to be prepared to give borrowed objects a high level of care and security so that they are returned in the same condition to their owners. If you are currently unable to do this, you should consider making a policy decision not to borrow objects.

Example text:

We will apply the same levels of care to objects we borrow as we do to any other item in our collections, with objects subject to the standards outlined in the loan agreement (agreed with the lender) and our Collection Care Policy. The condition of all borrowed objects will be monitored throughout the term of the loan, and loans will additionally always have condition reports completed.

7. How we cover costs for objects we borrow.

Remember that there are costs associated with borrowing objects.

Example text:

For exhibition loans, we will meet all reasonable costs of arranging the loan, such as transport, insurance, conservation, framing or mounting, and courier costs. These will be agreed in advance with the lender. All loans in will be insured or indemnified at a value agreed with the lender, or when appropriate shared liability arrangements may be agreed with the lender.

8. How we document objects we borrow.

Look at the loans in procedure in the Information Management Toolkit. Consider the steps in the workflow and discuss how you might comply with this procedure if you borrow objects. Be aware that you will need to have a written agreement with the lender, condition report for the object at the beginning and end of the loan, monitoring records for the loan when it is at your museum and records capturing all aspects of the loan.

Example text:

An agreement will be signed between us and the lender before the loan begins. Agreements will outline the reason for the loan and the terms and conditions that both we and the lender will adhere to.

All records relating to the loan will be held in a dedicated loans file, these will include:

- *Correspondence between us and the owner*
- *The loan agreement between us and the owner, describing in detail the terms of the loan (reason for loan, period of loan, transport, packing, care, security, insurance, costs).*
- *Condition reports*
- *A catalogue record for the loan containing core information about the object*
- *Insurance information*

9. How we authorise loans at our museum.

Loans are usually agreed at a high level in the museum. Discuss the process for agreeing loans – which post would be responsible for authorising a loan?

Example text:

At [museum name] loans are always authorised by [job title]. The person in this post will sign the loan agreement on behalf of our museum.
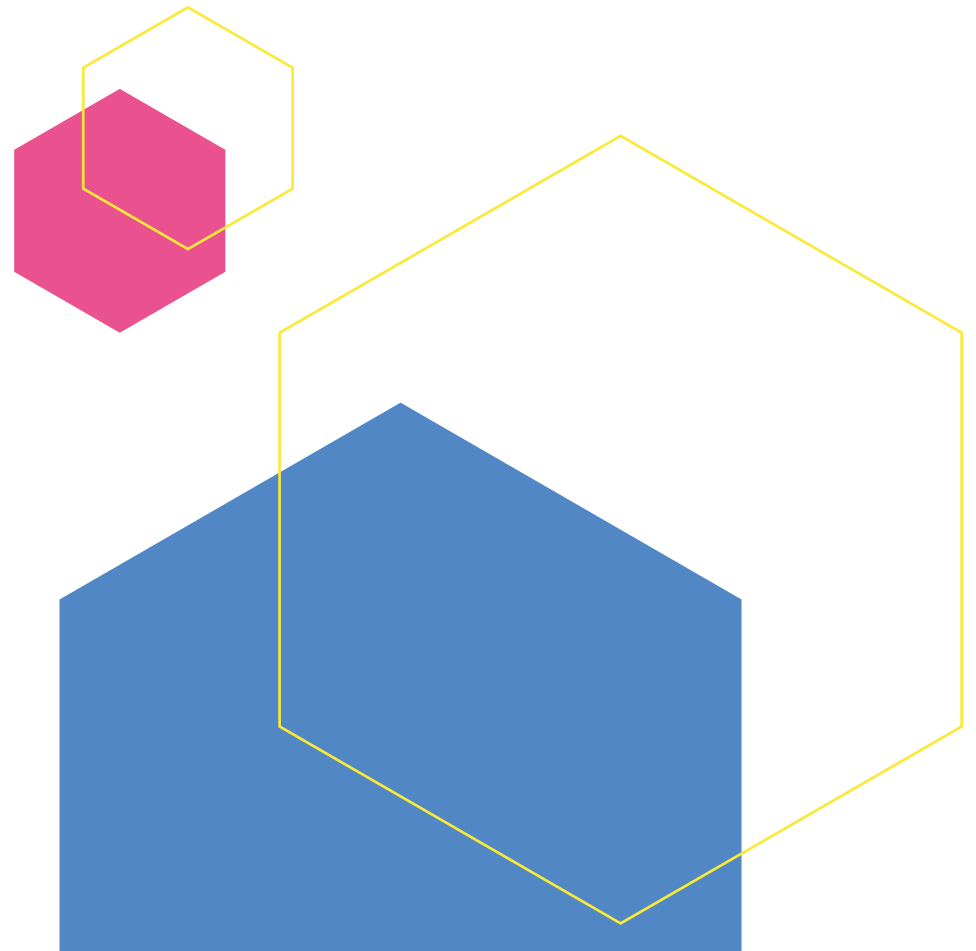
In this section you can explore what might be in your museum's loans out policy. 'Loans out' is the Spectrum term used in the Information Management Toolkit to describe objects that are loaned from your museum, usually to other museums.

- Each heading in **bold** should be discussed with your colleagues as you shape and write your museum's loans out policy.

- Text in *italics* gives you example text from typical loans out policy.

- Remember to put your text into the template format from **section 4.**

Before you start you need to decide if your museum is in a position to lend objects. Study the areas for discussion below and the example text from typical loans policies. If you think that your museum is currently not in a position to lend objects (perhaps you don't have the resources to do it to a high standard) then you need to make a policy decision that your museum will not lend and you will not need to create a loans out policy. The decision not to lend is usually recorded in your access policy – you might do this under heading number 4 in the access policy template.

1. The aim of this policy

Example text:

Loans enable museums to reach wider audiences, reunite fragments of the same object, set collections in context and increase public awareness of museums. Loans increase access for users , encourage lenders and borrowers to work in a spirit of partnership and cooperation and develop long-term relationships that will deliver services that appeal to a audiences. [Museum name] lends objects to other museums to deliver its mission and enhance access to its collections. The aim of this policy is to set out the terms under which [museum name] lends objects.

2. Why our museum lends objects.

Discuss the circumstances under which your museum might lend objects. Your mission should contain a commitment to safeguarding your collections, and you will want to ensure that your terms for lending do not place objects at risk. It is good practice to only lend for specific purposes (e.g. for an exhibition).

Example text:

All loans are made for a specified purpose. [Museum name] will lend objects for the following purposes:

- *To widen access to the collections*

- *To develop strategic partnerships*

- *To support research into the collections*

- *To promote our collections to international audiences*

3. Who can borrow our collections and what can they borrow?

Most museums will usually only lend to other museums. You will need to consider the availability of the object requested (you may not want to lend objects that form an integral part of your exhibitions) and the resources you have available to process the loan.

Example text:

We will normally only lend to other museums. We will review each loan request to ensure that the loan complies with this policy, supports our own priorities and aims and we have the resources to prepare the loan.

We will consider lending from the following collections:

- *[list collections]*

We will not lend an object which is not fit to travel or is not fit for display unless we have made arrangements with the borrower to conserve the object prior to its departure from our museum.

Requests for loans should be sent to the museum [insert contact details] and should include:

- *Borrower's name, address and contact details*
- *A complete list of the objects requested, where possible quoting our object numbers*
- *Reason for the loan*
- *Title of the exhibition, venues and dates, scope of the exhibition*
- *Duration of the loan*

4. The duration of our loans.

It is good practice to agree loans for a fixed period, usually a maximum of 3–5 years. Never agree to a 'permanent' loan.

Example text:

[Museum name] will only lend objects for agreed periods; the initial loan period will be between one month and three years.

5. The ethical codes and laws issues we will comply with when agreeing to lend an object.

Example text:

When we borrow objects we will comply with:

- *ICOM Code of Ethics for Museum 2004 (see 1.8; 2.2; 2.3)*
- *UNESCO 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property.*
- *Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, CITES, 1973*
- *[list any relevant Myanmar laws]*

Borrowers must be able to demonstrate that no objects in the proposed exhibition are known or suspected to have been stolen, illegally imported/exported, or illegally excavated.

We will not proceed with a loan if we believe that:

- *We do not have title to the object to be loaned*
- *The object is stolen, illegally exported or illegally imported*
- *Lending the object will contravene any relevant laws*

6. The standards of care we expect for objects we lend from our collections.

You will need to be sure that the objects you lend are given appropriate levels of care and security.
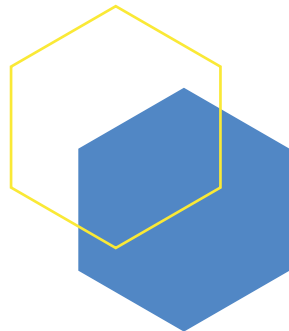
Example text:

The borrower must provide adequate storage, display conditions, security and insurance for the loan. The standard of security required will vary with the nature of the object, the place of exhibition and the degree of public access. We expect the condition of all loaned objects will be monitored throughout the term of the loan.

7. How we cover costs for objects we lend.

You will probably expect the borrower to meet costs such as transport and packing. Are you prepared to meet the costs of processing the loan at your museum?

Example text:

We expect the borrower to meet all the costs of the loan, such as transport, insurance, conservation, framing or mounting, and courier costs. We will meet the costs of documenting and processing the loan. Costs will be agreed in advance in a loan agreement.

8. How we document objects we lend.

Look at the loans out procedure in the Information Management Toolkit. Consider the steps in the workflow and discuss how you might comply with this procedure if you lend objects.

Example text:

An agreement will be signed between us and the borrower before the loan begins. Agreements will outline the reason for the loan and the terms and conditions that both we and the borrower will adhere to.

All records relating to the loan will be held in a dedicated loans file, these will include:

- *Our accession number for the object*
- *Correspondence between us and the borrower*
- *The loan agreement between us and the borrower, describing in detail the terms of the loan (reason for loan, duration, transport, packing, care, security, insurance, costs).*
- *Condition reports and insurance information*

9. How we authorise loans at our museum.

Example text:

Loans are usually agreed at a high level in the museum. Which post would authorise a loan in your museum? Example text: At [museum name] loans are always authorised by [job title]. The person in this post will sign the loan agreement on behalf of our museum.

ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums 2004.

https://icom.museum/en/activities/standards-guidelines/code-of-ethics/

ICOM is the International Council of Museums. The ICOM Code reflects the ethical principles that have been accepted by the international museum community as base-line standards for the museum sector worldwide. Some countries use the ICOM Code as a foundation for creating their own codes. Myanmar is a member of ICOM and this toolkit uses the ICOM Code of Ethics as a starting point in each of the Policy frameworks (sections 7–12).

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

http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/illicit-trafficking-of-cultural-property/1970-convention/text-of-the-convention/

UNESCO stands for 'United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization'. UNESCO builds 'peace through international cooperation in education, the sciences and culture'.

The 1970 convention is an international agreement dedicated to fighting the illicit trading and trafficking of stolen cultural property. It is usually enforced in the signatory countries by further domestic legislation.

The convention applies to museum in all signatory countries and is usually referenced in their acquisition and disposal policy, where they undertake to comply with the convention. This means that they will not to acquire or exhibit stolen cultural property.

Myanmar signed up to the convention in 2014.

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, CITES, 1973

http://www.cites.org/eng/disc/text.php

CITES is a treaty to protect endangered species by ensuring that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten the survival of the species in the wild,. Approximately 35,000 species of animals and plants are listed by CITES and trade in them is regulated. CITES applies to live animals and plants, but also to a wide range of wildlife products derived from them.

The treaty applies to museums in all signatory countries and is usually referenced in their acquisition and disposal policy, where they undertake to comply with the treaty. This means that they recognise that there are restrictions on acquiring plants or animals (dead or alive), or derivatives of plants or animals, originating from endangered species.

Signatory countries agree to implement the convention and do this by creating their own domestic laws to enforce CITES.

Myanmar signed up to the treaty in 1997.

PAS 197: 2009 Code of practice for cultural collections management.

https://shop.bsigroup.com/ProductDetail/?pid=000000000030175180

This is a British Standards specification for collections management. The principles in it are widely used in UK museum. The principle of 4 collections management areas and the link between mission/policy/procedure comes from this standard.

Benchmarks in Collection Care

https://collectionstrust.org.uk/resource/benchmarks-in-collections-care-2-0/

This is a self-assessment checklist, which sets out benchmarks or levels in collections care. The checklist helps museums to describe the level that they meet, and aim to meet, for different areas of collections care, including storage, housekeeping, environmental monitoring and environmental control. It is widely used in museums to assess their level of collections care and improve it over time.
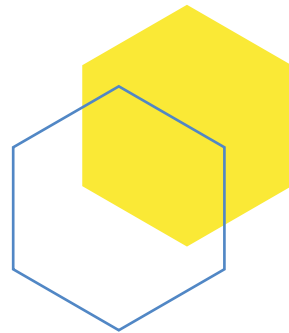
Spectrum: the UK collections management standard.

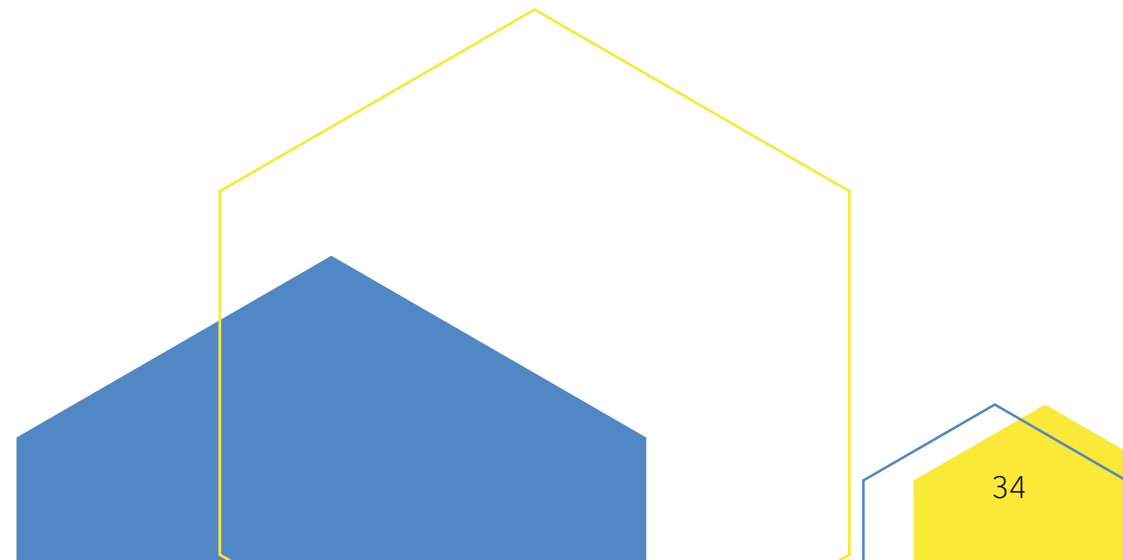https://collectionstrust.org.uk/spectrum/

Spectrum is an international standard describing minimum standards for the day to day activities (or procedures) that take place in most museums when they manage their collections. The section of Spectrum that focusses on the documentation of collections is available to Myanmar museums through the Information Management Toolkit (available in English and Burmese at https://www.britishcouncil.org.mm/programmes/arts/international-museum-academy-myanmar)

UK Museum Accreditation Standard.

https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Accreditation_standard.pdf

This is a UK standard which sets out minimum standards for the management of UK museums and their collections and for the delivery of museum services to the public.

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