



# Museum of London - Collections Development Policy

**Name of museum:** *Museum of London and the Museum of London Docklands*

**Name of governing body:** *Board of Governors of the Museum of London*

**Date on which this policy was approved by governing body:** *05 October 2016*

**Policy review procedure:** *The Collections Development will be published and reviewed from time to time, at least once every five years. The museum has identified that it intends to have an interim review within two years to revisit its collecting focus as part of its New Museum Project.*

**Date at which this policy is due for review:** *2021 (see above)*

*Arts Council England will be notified of any changes to the collections development policy, and the implications of any such changes for the future of collections.*

## Policy

### 1. Relationship to other relevant policies/plans of the organisation:

1.1. The museum's statement of purpose is:

Our passion for London is infectious and is born out of our commitment to exploring the ever-changing story of this great world city. We want to inspire such passion in others through releasing the power that is currently locked behind our bastion walls. We aim to stimulate thinking and engagement with London in new ways, to be a part of every Londoner's life from an early age and to contribute to the city's international, educational, cultural, economic and reputational impetus.

We have five strategic objectives to guide our activities:

1. Reach more people
2. Become better known
3. Stretch thinking
4. Engage every school child
5. Stand on our own two feet

Our collections underpin all that we do and embody, represent and evidence the energy, history and passion of London itself. They are the 'DNA' of London. They are our core content and their development affects every aspect of our programming. Our new Content Framework is reshaping how we organise and deliver our content. How we present the collection, what is in it, the research that supports it, all should engage with the big questions about London and its place in the world.

To deliver our current strategic objectives we are committed to increasing access (intellectually, physically and digitally), improving the care and storage of the collections, reviewing significance and rationalising, enhancing the information we hold and intellectually developing them. Additionally, we want to grow the use of our collections for research, increase their availability online and make strategic acquisitions to ensure we are collecting for tomorrow.

Our current ambitions are derived from our long term purpose as set out in the two Acts of Parliament that established the museum. These state that we will: care for, preserve and add objects to our collections; make them accessible via display and for research; promote understanding and appreciation of historic and contemporary London and of its society and culture using this collection and other means.

- 1.2. The governing body will ensure that both acquisition and disposal are carried out openly and with transparency.
- 1.3. By definition, the Museum of London has a long-term purpose and holds collections in trust for the benefit of the public in relation to its stated objectives. The governing body therefore accepts the principle that sound curatorial reasons must be established before consideration is given to any acquisition to the collection, or the disposal of any items in the museum's collection.
- 1.4. Acquisitions outside the current stated policy will only be made in exceptional circumstances.
- 1.5. The museum recognises its responsibility, when acquiring additions to its collections, to ensure that care of collections, documentation arrangements and use of collections will meet the requirements of the Museum Accreditation Standard. This includes using SPECTRUM primary procedures for collections management. It will take into account limitations on collecting imposed by such factors as staffing, storage and care of collection arrangements.
- 1.6. The museum will undertake due diligence and make every effort not to acquire, whether by purchase, gift, bequest or exchange, any object or specimen unless the governing body or responsible officer is satisfied that the museum can acquire a valid title to the item in question.
- 1.7. The museum will not undertake disposal motivated principally by financial reasons

## 2. History of the collections

The Museum of London's collection, called **the London Collection**, has developed over the last 190 years. It is the world's largest relating to a single urban centre over a 2,000 year period and the most important source for the material evidence of London's history. It includes collections from two precursor museums: the Guildhall Museum and the London Museum.

The Corporation of London established the Guildhall Museum in 1826. Its collection of antiquities was built up during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries with items coming from construction sites in the City of London. The museum confined its collecting to items found largely within 'the Square Mile', an area delineated by the medieval walled city, and from the Thames. It acquired other material relating to the civic and ceremonial history of the City of London as well as architectural fixtures and fittings.

The London Museum, founded in 1911, had a much broader and ambitious collecting brief than the Guildhall Museum. With a specific populist agenda to tell the story of the history of London from earliest times through to the present, it collected from across London not just from the City. The museum was the brainchild of two politicians: Lewis, first Viscount Harcourt and Reginald Brett, second Viscount Esher. For much of its existence, the museum was funded by central government. Guy Laking (later Sir Guy), the museum's first Keeper and Secretary to the Trustees, played an important role in building the collections. Under his and then Mortimer Wheeler's keepership of the museum, a collection of national and international standing was created covering antiquities, fine and decorative arts, dress and textiles, vehicles, rare books, maps, manuscripts and printed ephemera. J.G. Joicey was, perhaps, the museum's most generous benefactor. He loaned and then gifted his large collection of porcelain, clocks and watches,

jewellery, embroidery and costume, as well as on his death in 1919 leaving the museum the residue of his considerable estate to support acquisitions.

After the Second World War, both the Guildhall Museum and the London Museum found themselves in temporary homes. The destruction of large parts of the City in the Blitz provided an opportunity for large scale archaeological excavations. In the 1950s, discussions took place about the amalgamation of the London Museum and the Guildhall Museum. In 1965, the Museum of London was established by an Act of Parliament and in 1976 the new museum opened to the public at London Wall. The suite of galleries presented a three dimensional biography of the capital, drawing on many items from the newly combined collections as well as more recent acquisitions.

The greatest growth of the Museum of London's collection over the last forty years has been in archaeology and material relating to the modern history of London. In 1976, the Museum had two field units, one for the City of London and one for Greater London with complete archives of archaeological records and finds being acquired on a site-by-site basis. In 1991, the two units were restructured into one service and in 2002 an archaeological archive and research centre opened in Hackney where the finds and records from individual excavations are deposited and stored. In 2003, the Centre for Human Bioarchaeology was set up to curate the human skeletal remains.

The Museum was a pioneer in the collecting of contemporary material from all walks of London life. Items were acquired from domestic environments as well as the work and leisure spaces of the capital. The closure of London's upriver docks and wharves in the 1970s and 1980s spurred a new collecting initiative, particularly tools and equipment used in the port. In 2003, a large museum to display this material, the Museum of London Docklands, opened in a converted Georgian dock warehouse opposite Canary Wharf.

Oral history was a new area of collecting for the museum in the late 1980s. Many interviews were made over the next two decades creating a very wide ranging and important collection. In 2014, the museum completed the digitisation of its entire oral history collection which, to date, amounts to over 5000 hours of recording. The photographic collection expanded rapidly after the opening of the Museum of London. A small collection had been built up by the London Museum but it was only with the appointment of a dedicated curator of historic photographs that the collection began to develop in focused way. Paintings, prints and drawings acquisitions also increased after 1976 with help from funding agencies and charities.

Major acquisitions included George Elgar Hicks' 'The General Post Office, One Minute to Six' of 1860 (1990), the 'Rhinebeck Panorama' of London, 1806 (1998) and two works by Henry Nelson O'Neil, 'Eastward Ho! August 1857' and 'Home Again, 1858' (2004) with a commission inspired by these latter two works by The Singh Twins, 'EnTWINed', 2009 (2010).

The dress and textile collection has grown in a similar way to other modern collections with many items added made by London ready-to-wear manufacturers and couture houses and designers. Contemporary collecting is actively pursued with recent projects undertaken including Muslim fashion (2014) and punks (2016). An active collecting project was successfully completed around the London Olympics in 2012 which included costumes from the opening ceremony as well as the Olympic Cauldron designed by Thomas Heatherwick for which a special permanent gallery was created within the museum.

The Museum began to acquire born-digital material in 2012 when it collected c.6000 unique Tweets using the hashtag #citizencurators during the two weeks of the Olympic Games. This was an experimental collecting project which investigated the issues surrounding the collecting of social media. In 2015-16, a collecting project focused on video gaming and the video game industry in London.

Access to the London Collection has increased through the creation of the collections online resource on the museum's web site. Currently, over 90,000 objects can be accessed online.

### **3. An overview of current collections**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The London Collection reflects our standing as the world's largest urban museum and we currently hold almost 7 million items. Viewed as a whole, the London Collection provides a multi-faceted, three-dimensional, multi-media biography of the metropolis and its people for over 10,000 years.

#### **3.2 Archaeological Archive: c. 6 million items**

The Museum's archaeological collections, mostly held within the Archaeological Archive, are not only by far the largest and most comprehensive body of urban archaeology in Britain, but also one of the most important repositories for urban studies in the world. The Archive holds contextually excavated archaeological material from sites across Greater London. It covers all periods of London's urban history, as well as the prehistory of the region from the earliest evidence of human occupation a quarter of a million years ago. Contained amongst these extensive holdings are: the sole source of information on all aspects of the Roman built environment and context for the non-excavated Roman collections in London and elsewhere; material excavated from in and around Covent Garden and the Aldwych, which constitutes the evidence for the existence of the Middle Saxon settlement of *Lundenwic*; unparalleled evidence of Medieval domestic life; and Post-medieval material which reflects London's role as the nation's pre-eminent market, complemented by artefactual evidence reflecting London's global trading networks.

#### **3.3 Human remains: over 20,000 individuals**

The human skeletal remains curated by the Centre for Human Bioarchaeology are a unique and internationally significant collection. London is the only capital in the world to be able to tell its history through the physical evidence of the people who inhabited it. Every skeleton has a unique 'bone biography' capturing different sets of 'life data' as a person grows, lives and dies. This information is often the sole means of determining a person's social and living conditions, their diet and nutrition, ancestry and status. The skeletal remains provide extraordinary data about individuals and population groups; and tangible evidence for the demographic structure of the capital and its region over half a million years.

#### **3.4 Prehistory: over 13,000 items**

Flint and stone implements constitute the largest part of the prehistoric collections. The Museum holds material of international importance from Lower Palaeolithic sites such as Swanscombe, Yiewsley and Stoke Newington. The most important holdings within the prehistoric collection are the 900 pieces of Bronze Age and Iron Age metalwork, mostly recovered from the Thames. The Thomas Layton collection includes a fine series of late Hallstatt/early La Tene daggers and two famous items of later Iron Age metalwork: a chariot fitting or 'horn cap' decorated in the Celtic art style, and a bronze-bound oak tankard.

#### **3.5 Roman: over 45,000 items**

The Museum has by far the largest collection of Romano-British marble statuary in Britain. Of this, the London Mithraeum group, which includes representations of Mithras, Minerva, Serapis, and Mercury, is the best example of Roman sculpture in the country. The samian ware holdings comprise the preeminent collection in Britain, and one of the finest in the world. The leather collection is an important resource for the study of Roman leather-working techniques, particularly shoe manufacture. The most famous items are the 'bikini' briefs which are the most complete examples known. The glass collection forms a significant body of material for dating types and establishing trading patterns. The superbly preserved metal collection and the wide-ranging selection of domestic, industrial and religious artefacts make this perhaps the best collection in Britain.

### **3.6 Saxon, Norman and Medieval: c. 16,000 items**

This collection includes important assemblages from the pagan Saxon cemeteries at Mitcham, Croydon, Hanwell and Ewell and Late Saxon/early Norman material from the City, including pottery, domestic items and jewellery. The single most important object of Late Saxon date in the collections, generally acknowledged as the 'finest Viking antiquity in the country', is the carved tomb-slab with runic inscription found near St Paul's in 1852.

The medieval collection (around 12,000 items) is one of the most celebrated elements of our overall holdings because of its breadth, depth and quality. It is strongest in ordinary domestic objects, particularly dress accessories, knives, tools and arms and armour. Pilgrim and secular badges and souvenirs constitute the most important group of their kind in Britain and one of the finest in Europe. The ceramics holdings are generally recognized as the best collection of medieval pottery in England, if not Europe.

### **3.7 Early Modern: over 40,000 items**

The Museum's early modern collections reflect the huge changes in London life and society during this time. Amongst the preeminent and significant holdings are edged-weapons, scientific and mathematical instruments, London-made musical instruments, cloth and dyers seals, trade tokens, glass and ceramics, including Rhenish stoneware and Delftware. The world-famous Cheapside Hoard is an internationally celebrated collection (almost 500 pieces). It is the sole source of our knowledge of Elizabethan and early Stuart jewellery and the largest hoard of its kind anywhere in the world.

### **3.8 The Modern collections: over c.100,000 items**

The modern period collections are unparalleled for their richness and diversity and the quality of contextual information with which they are associated. These collections document the experience of living in the metropolis for Londoners of all sections of society and cover an overwhelming range of themes: toys and games; life events; domestic material; furniture, fixtures and fittings; items relating to metropolitan infrastructure such as government, public utilities, welfare, housing, and education; material derived from service industries including retail, leisure, finance, and telecommunications. Significant events in the capital are represented, such as the Great Exhibition, the Blitz, the Festival of Britain, and the three London Olympic games. Of particular significance is the collection of Suffragette material including minute books, photographs and postcards, badges and scarves, and relics from hunger strikes. More recent political protest material includes items from Brian Haw's peace camp set up in Parliament Square in 2001.

The Museum holds workshop tools and machinery for seventy-five different crafts, manufacturing and processing trades; extensive groups of objects relating to London's principal markets, notably Billingsgate, Spitalfields and Covent Garden; and unrivalled collections of material relating to London's docks including river craft and cargo handling equipment ranging from dockers' hooks to hydraulic jiggers. The ceramic collections of the 18<sup>th</sup> to early 20<sup>th</sup> century are outstanding, with nationally important material from London porcelain factories and art pottery made by Doulton, William de Morgan and the Martin brothers.

### **3.9 Dress and Textiles: c. 23,000 items**

The collection contains over 23,000 objects from the medieval period to the present day. The focus is on clothes and textiles made, promoted, bought and worn in London to represent the capital's role in the design, production and consumption of garments and reflect the life of all of London's communities. The collection ranges from garments sewn at home, made by dressmakers and tailors to those created by London-based couture houses and designers such as Lucile, Hardy Amies, Norman Hartnell, Victor Stiebel, Mary Quant, Katharine Hamnett, Vivienne Westwood and Alexander McQueen. Clothing purchased in department stores, high street chains, boutiques, suburban outfitters and markets represent London's varied retail outlets.

### 3.10 Art and Photography: c. 170,000 items

The art collections comprise a visual encyclopaedia of London from the 16<sup>th</sup> century to the present day. They include major works of art by leading artists alongside items of historic rather than artistic significance. Both reflect the importance of London both as a centre for art and a subject for artists and provide a visually diverse reflection of London's physical and social fabric. The paintings, prints and drawings collection (c 20,000 items) is one of the largest in the United Kingdom and includes works by artists such as Canaletto, Paul Sandby, Henry Nelson O'Neil, Walter Sickert, David Bomberg and Henry Moore. The emphasis of the Historic Photographs collection (over 150,000 items) is on topography and social documentary, and includes photographers such as Henry Fox Talbot, Roger Fenton, Christina Broom, Bill Brandt, Henry Grant, and Rut Blees Luxemburg.

### 3.12 Printed ephemera, rare books, maps and manuscripts: over 100,000 items

The printed ephemera collection comprises 75,000 items. It is arranged thematically and covers all aspects of London's cultural, social and working history ranging from leisure and shopping through to political campaigning and crime. The collection includes both historic and contemporary material, ranging from miscellaneous accounts and deeds of the 15<sup>th</sup> century to London's current obsessions and pre-occupations from nail parlours to drug abuse. The museum's Map Collection is particularly important and includes the master Booth Map of Poverty (1888-89), perhaps the most famous map of the entire 19th century. The Tangye Collection of Cromwelliana includes many rare books and manuscripts such as holograph letters of Charles I and Oliver Cromwell, and the only known copy of the Journal of Cromwell's House of Lords from its inauguration to its last sitting (1657-59).

### 3.13 Digital collections: c. 5000 hours of interviews

The museum has been collecting the life histories and memories of Londoners since the 1980s. The collection includes important groups of recordings including the Port and River Sound Archive and the London History Workshop collection. Interviews focus on interviewees' working lives, labour relations, family life and childhood, community and social life, and the two world wars. Other recordings were made for The Peopling of London exhibition (1993-94) and London's Voices project (2005-06) which resulted in 200 life story interviews with Londoners from many different communities and backgrounds.

Recent collecting has included projects around the London 2012 Olympics, Punks and London Tattooists. In 2012, the museum's first Digital Collecting Framework was produced, reflecting our ambition to capture London's 'born-digital' culture. To date this has ranged from Londoners' social media reactions to events to a collecting project examining London in digital video games.

## 4. Themes and priorities for future collecting

4.1 The aims of the acquisitions programme are to:

- ensure the focussed development of **the London Collection** to provide well-balanced and up-to-date coverage of the Museum of London's remit
- support the development of the New Museum of London in West Smithfield
- provide primary evidence and key secondary sources for research, publishing, broadcasting and other public needs

Over the next five years, the museum aspires to increase in-the-round access (i.e. physically, virtually and intellectually) to **the London Collection**.

4.2 Acquisition is the process of obtaining responsibility for an item, associated due diligence, rights management and transfer of title.

In addition to items acquired for formal accession into the London Collection, other items may be acquired to support Museum of London's Learning activities (Learning Collection), and to support exhibitions and displays (Support Collection).

The Learning Collection consists of objects specifically chosen for handling and teaching purposes. It is a mixture of accessioned objects and objects from the Support Collection and is stored separately from the London Collection. The Support Collection includes items that the museum may wish to keep but not as part of the London Collection (e.g. models, facsimiles, audio-visual content).

4.3 Accession is a status afforded to those items (material culture and digital culture) that the Museum of London deems to be of such significance that they merit permanent retention and preservation.

Acquisitions to all categories of the London Collection must demonstrate strong relevance to London.

In principle the Museum of London seeks to accession:

- Material which is important for the history of London
- Material which is important for the study of London
- Material which embodies or expresses powerful personal responses to or stories about London

4.4 Collecting may result from proactive projects or in response to the offer of material by members of the public or other institutions. In both instances collecting will be a focused outcome of the formal review of the existing collection.

4.5 The Museum of London's **Content Framework** is central to how the museum develops its collection.

The framework sets out **the Content Universe**:

*The core chronology of the Museum of London stretches from around 10,000 years ago to this very moment, looking beyond these thresholds we consider what came before and what might come next. Our heartland is the London Boroughs, we will follow their sphere of influence to the commuter belt, and where it ripples beyond to the ends of the earth.*

It also identifies four **Content Priorities**:

- **Global City:** *London transcends its role as capital. It is one of a handful of cities that can claim to be an economic giant, a political hub and cultural powerhouse that drives global markets, decision making and conversations. It has always been a world city and an international gateway for people and goods, exhibiting the very best and very worst of what a city can be.*
- **Iconic London:** *London icons are world famous. They are the places, people, things and events that are uniquely associated with London and form part of its identity. They can be both real and mythical influencing our perception of the city and our interaction with it. Iconic London continues to evolve as new symbols and faces of London emerge.*
- **City Now, City Future:** *London is a social laboratory. It is a focus for research, policy-making and public debate and an important source of data about how cities work. At the same time people are negotiating London day to day, experiencing those things that make city life attractive and challenging. By understanding the city we can start to imagine how London could change and influence its future.*
- **Creative Capital:** *Creativity is a key characteristic of London. This city has hosted both famous and little-known talents who have created a rich back catalogue of cultural work stretching back hundreds if not thousands of years. Londoners have also been at the forefront of technological and productive creativity, responding to the opportunities and problems of city life.*

To supplement the **Content Framework**, collecting outlines for each curatorial area exist which set out detailed descriptions of current holdings and aspirations for collecting. These are reviewed and updated by

staff when necessary, and with reference to current strategic aims. The result is the targeting of collection acquisition and disposal.

4.6 The Museum is in the initial stages of the New Museum Project to relocate to the new site at West Smithfield. Proactive collecting projects over the next five years will form the New Museum Acquisitions Programme which will support the content needs of this major transformation project.

The New Museum Acquisitions Programme will give particular attention to engagement with Londoners through carefully focused calls for material. In this regard, particular efforts will be made to reach out to all of the 32 London Boroughs. It is anticipated that digital collecting will be a key element of this strand of activity.

The New Museum Acquisitions Programme will be augmented by commissions including art, photography, film and new media that explore and respond to the Content Framework Priorities. If practical, these should become part of **the London Collection**.

The next five years will be a period of transition and reinvention for the museum. As a result, whilst it is not expected there will be a significant shift away from the principles set out above, the precise focus of proactive collecting may need to be fine-tuned as the project develops.

Areas currently identified as of interest include:

- The Smithfield Conservation area
- London data (including creative responses to the presentation of data)
- London events, both official and unofficial, possibly recorded at a personal level by Londoners or where the museum undertakes 'rapid response' collecting, either directly or through engagement with Londoners

4.8 The Museum of London collects records and finds ('archives') from archaeological projects throughout Greater London, provided that they comply with the general aims of the acquisitions programme (Section 4.1 above). Such archives must be prepared in accordance with the detailed standards published on our website, and fieldwork projects initiated since 1 May 2013 are liable to deposition fees (though these may be waived if the work was carried out by amateur or academic organisations).

4.9 The acquisition of human remains is governed by the Museum of London's 'Policy for the Care of Human Remains' and the deposition standards. The value of the remains for research and other uses is constantly reviewed and skeletons not deemed of value are reburied.

4.10 For the Museum, the archaeological and historical context of an item, together with the information associated with it, is of fundamental importance. It is this that determines the item's value to the museum rather than aesthetic or technological criteria alone. Normally, items are only acquired when they can satisfy the requirements of a strong London context.

## **5 Themes and priorities for rationalisation and disposal**

5.1 The museum recognises that the principles on which priorities for rationalisation and disposal are determined will be through a formal review process that identifies which collections are included and excluded from the review. The outcome of review and any subsequent rationalisation will not reduce the quality or significance of the collection and will result in a more useable, well managed collection.

5.2 The procedures used will meet professional standards. The process will be documented, open and transparent. There will be clear communication with key stakeholders about the outcomes and the process.

5.3 The themes and priorities for rationalisation and disposal are as follows:

5.3.1 The museum has an ongoing programme of review and rationalisation in relation to hazardous materials.

5.3.2 The museum has undertaken a formal review and rationalisation of its Social and Working History Collections supported by the Esmée Fairbairn Collections Fund.

5.3.3 The museum intends to conduct systematic and formal collections reviews in the next five years ahead of a move to a new site. As part of these reviews, consideration will be given to rationalisation and disposal.

## **6 Legal and ethical framework for acquisition and disposal of items**

6.1 The museum recognises its responsibility to work within the parameters of the Museum Association Code of Ethics when considering acquisition and disposal.

6.2 The museum is empowered to develop its collections under the terms of the Museum of London Acts, 1965 and 1968 (amended by the GLA Act 2007).

6.3 Under the terms of the Museum of London Act 1965, the Board has powers to sell, exchange, give away or otherwise dispose of any object comprised in the collection if it is a duplicate or is for any reason not, in the Board's opinion, required for retention, provided this is not inconsistent with any trust or condition attached to the object. Similarly, the Board may transfer any object, with any trust or condition attached thereto, to a national museum as listed in the National Heritage Act 1992.

6.4 The museum will assert title in all its collections. It will formally agree terms of copyright and reproduction rights with copyright holders, where appropriate. The museum has a detailed copyright policy.

6.5 The museum will only acquire works in copyright for which it can also obtain non-commercial rights: except in exceptional circumstances or in the cases of orphaned works.

## **7 Collecting policies of other museums**

7.1 The museum will take account of the collecting policies of other museums and other organisations collecting in the same or related areas or subject fields. It will consult with these organisations where conflicts of interest may arise or to define areas of specialism, in order to avoid unnecessary duplication and waste of resources.

7.2 Specific reference is made to the following museum(s)/organisation(s):

7.2.1 It is recognised that the capital's cultural heritage is preserved in a network of museums and other public collections, notably: bodies run by the City of London - the Guildhall Art Gallery, Guildhall Library and London Metropolitan Archives; London's borough museums; national museums and cultural bodies such as the British Film Institute.

- 7.2.2 For objects or collections of demonstrable local interest, there is a presumption in favour of London borough museums, which are assumed to have ‘first refusal’ rights for objects from their areas. Where appropriate, the Museum will actively draw the attention of borough museums to such objects or direct potential donors to their local museum.
- 7.2.3 The Museum has a non-mandatory regional role for the storage of archaeological material but not for any other type of item. It nevertheless supports strategic regional collecting initiatives, for example through subject-based networks. The Museum recognises that regional benefit may become a stronger factor in future collecting-decisions.

## **8 Archival holdings**

- 8.1 The Museum’s printed ephemera collection has long held material loosely described as ‘archives’: the Suffragette Archive, for example. However, a more formal interest in archives has developed in recent years, following the deposit of the Port of London Authority Archive with the Museum of London, Docklands and the opening of the Sainsbury Study Centre in 2003.
- 8.2 The Museum holds other isolated archive collections relating to subjects explored in the Museum’s Docklands galleries, together with the large Sainsbury Archive. The latter is held under a separate arrangement, and is not governed by this policy framework. The Museum’s archive collections are publically accessible through the Sainsbury Study Centre.
- 8.3 The Museum’s Library is primarily an information resource for staff but does hold special collections of rare books and maps, such as the Tangye Collections of Cromwelliana. Special collections also include the Port of London Authority Library. Books acquired as historical artefacts in their own right, are subject to the Museum’s acquisition procedure and policy, as set out here.
- 8.4 Archives are only acquired in exceptional circumstances. The Museum has a limited capacity to look after archives and only acquires business, personal or institutional archives where it is able to manage these archives and make them accessible to a standard consistent with professional archival practice. The Museum has no aspiration to develop its archive holdings to rival London’s existing Archives and Record Offices and will only acquire specific items on a case by case basis.
- 8.5 Archives considered for acquisition must relate to the Museum’s existing archive collections, or the subject interests and development aspirations of the Museum of London Docklands. The interests of relevant local archives, such as Tower Hamlets’, will be respected. This scope includes:
- London’s port and river
  - Slavery, the sugar trade and London’s Caribbean connections
  - Additions to existing archives held in the printed ephemera collections (for example, the Suffragettes)
- 8.6 More general archive material is referred to London Metropolitan Archives or the appropriate borough record offices. However, this does not preclude the Museum’s curatorial staff acquiring photographs, items of printed ephemera and recorded media material, which are classed by the Museum as ‘museum objects’ rather than ‘archives’.
- 8.7 Where the Museum holds or intends to acquire archives it is guided by the Code of Practice on Archives for Museums in the United Kingdom (2002)

8.8 The Library has a limited capacity to look after special collections. It does not collect rare books or other historic printed items that are better housed elsewhere: it seeks not to duplicate items that are easily accessible in other public collections.

## **9 Acquisition**

9.1 The Museum has formal Acquisition and Disposal Procedures. Acquisitions are considered by the Collections Committee who have delegated authority from the Board to assess, approve or decline new acquisitions, and to recommend disposals. Acquisitions are reported to the Board of Governors annually. Except in exceptional circumstances, all disposals have to be first approved by the Board of Governors.

9.2 The Museum will not acquire any object or specimen unless it is satisfied that the object or specimen has not been acquired in, or exported from, its country of origin (or any intermediate country in which it may have been legally owned) in violation of that country's laws. (For the purposes of this paragraph 'country of origin' includes the United Kingdom).

9.3 In accordance with the provisions of the UNESCO 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, which the UK ratified with effect from November 1 2002, and the Dealing in Cultural Objects (Offences) Act 2003, the museum will reject any items that have been illicitly traded. The governing body will be guided by the national guidance on the responsible acquisition of cultural property issued by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport in 2005.

9.4 Objects are not accepted on long term loan, other than in exceptional circumstances, for example as key items for display in the galleries; or as part of archive deposits. Refer to the [Loan In Policy](#) for further guidance.

## **10 Human remains**

10.1 As the museum holds or intends to acquire human remains from any period, it will follow the procedures in the 'Guidance for the care of human remains in museums' issued by DCMS in 2005.

10.2 The museum maintains a Policy for the Care of Human Remains in the Museum of London Collections.

## **11 Biological and geological material**

11.1 So far as biological and geological material is concerned, the museum will not acquire by any direct or indirect means any specimen that has been collected, sold or otherwise transferred in contravention of any national or international wildlife protection or natural history conservation law or treaty of the United Kingdom or any other country, except with the express consent of an appropriate outside authority.

## **12 Archaeological material**

12.1 The museum will not acquire archaeological material (including excavated ceramics) in any case where the governing body or responsible officer has any suspicion that the circumstances of their recovery involved a failure to follow the appropriate legal procedures.

12.2 In England, Wales and Northern Ireland the procedures include reporting finds to the landowner or occupier of the land and to the proper authorities in the case of possible treasure (i.e. the Coroner for Treasure) as set out in the Treasure Act 1996 (as amended by the Coroners & Justice Act 2009).

### **13 Exceptions**

13.1 Any exceptions to the above clauses will only be because the museum is:

- acting as an externally approved repository of last resort for material of local (UK) origin
- acting with the permission of authorities with the requisite jurisdiction in the country of origin

In these cases the museum will be open and transparent in the way it makes decisions and will act only with the express consent of an appropriate outside authority. The museum will document when these exceptions occur.

### **14 Spoliation**

14.1 The museum will use the statement of principles 'Spoliation of Works of Art during the Nazi, Holocaust and World War II period', issued for non-national museums in 1999 by the Museums and Galleries Commission.

### **15 The Repatriation and Restitution of objects and human remains**

15.1 The museum's governing body, acting on the advice of the museum's professional staff, if any, may take a decision to return human remains (unless covered by the 'Guidance for the care of human remains in museums' issued by DCMS in 2005), objects or specimens to a country or people of origin. The museum will take such decisions on a case by case basis; within its legal position and taking into account all ethical implications and available guidance. This will mean that the procedures described in 16.1-5 will be followed but the remaining procedures are not appropriate.

15.2 The disposal of human remains from museums in England, Northern Ireland and Wales will follow the procedures in the 'Guidance for the care of human remains in museums'.

### **16 Disposal procedures**

16.1 All disposals will be undertaken with reference to the SPECTRUM Primary Procedures on disposal.

16.2 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.

16.3 When disposal of a museum object is being considered, the museum will establish if it was acquired with the aid of an external funding organisation. In such cases, any conditions attached to the original grant will be followed. This may include repayment of the original grant and a proportion of the proceeds if the item is disposed of by sale.

16.4 When disposal is motivated by curatorial reasons the procedures outlined below will be followed and the method of disposal may be by gift, sale, exchange or as a last resort - destruction.

16.5 The decision to dispose of material from the collections will be taken by the governing body only after full consideration of the reasons for disposal. Other factors including public benefit, the implications for the museum's collections and collections held by museums and other organisations collecting the same material or in related fields will be considered. Expert advice will be obtained

and the views of stakeholders such as donors, researchers, local and source communities and others served by the museum will also be sought.

- 16.6 A decision to dispose of a specimen or object, whether by gift, exchange, sale or destruction (in the case of an item too badly damaged or deteriorated to be of any use for the purposes of the collections or for reasons of health and safety), will be the responsibility of the governing body of the museum acting on the advice of professional curatorial staff, if any, and not of the curator or manager of the collection acting alone.
- 16.7 Once a decision to dispose of material in the collection has been taken, priority will be given to retaining it within the public domain. It will therefore be offered in the first instance, by gift or sale, directly to other Accredited Museums likely to be interested in its acquisition.
- 16.8 If the material is not acquired by any Accredited museum to which it was offered as a gift or for sale, then the museum community at large will be advised of the intention to dispose of the material, normally through a notice on the MA's Find an Object web listing service, an announcement in the Museums Association's Museums Journal or in other specialist publications and websites (if appropriate).
- 16.9 The announcement relating to gift or sale will indicate the number and nature of specimens or objects involved, and the basis on which the material will be transferred to another institution. Preference will be given to expressions of interest from other Accredited Museums. A period of at least two months will be allowed for an interest in acquiring the material to be expressed. At the end of this period, if no expressions of interest have been received, the museum may consider disposing of the material to other interested individuals and organisations giving priority to organisations in the public domain.
- 16.10 Any monies received by the museum governing body from the disposal of items will be applied solely and directly for the benefit of the collections. This normally means the purchase of further acquisitions. In exceptional cases, improvements relating to the care of collections in order to meet or exceed Accreditation requirements relating to the risk of damage to and deterioration of the collections may be justifiable. Any monies received in compensation for the damage, loss or destruction of items will be applied in the same way. Advice on those cases where the monies are intended to be used for the care of collections will be sought from the Arts Council England
- 16.11 The proceeds of a sale will be allocated so it can be demonstrated that they are spent in a manner compatible with the requirements of the Accreditation standard. Money must be restricted to the long-term sustainability, use and development of the collection.
- 16.12 Full records will be kept of all decisions on disposals and the items involved and proper arrangements made for the preservation and/or transfer, as appropriate, of the documentation relating to the items concerned, including photographic records where practicable in accordance with SPECTRUM Procedure on deaccession and disposal.

### ***Disposal by exchange***

- 16.13.1 In cases where the governing body wishes for sound curatorial reasons to exchange material directly with Accredited or non-Accredited museums, with other organisations or with individuals, the procedures in paragraphs 16.1-5 will apply.

- 16.13.2 If the exchange is proposed to be made with a specific Accredited museum, other Accredited museums which collect in the same or related areas will be directly notified of the proposal and their comments will be requested.
- 16.13.3 If the exchange is proposed with a non-Accredited museum, with another type of organisation or with an individual, the museum will place a notice on the MA's Find an Object web listing service, or make an announcement in the Museums Association's Museums Journal or in other specialist publications and websites (if appropriate).
- 16.13.4 Both the notification and announcement must provide information on the number and nature of the specimens or objects involved both in the museum's collection and those intended to be acquired in exchange. A period of at least two months must be allowed for comments to be received. At the end of this period, the governing body must consider the comments before a final decision on the exchange is made.

### ***Disposal by destruction***

- 16.14 If it is not possible to dispose of an object through transfer or sale, the governing body may decide to destroy it.
- 16.15 It is acceptable to destroy material of low intrinsic significance (duplicate mass-produced articles or common specimens which lack significant provenance) where no alternative method of disposal can be found.
- 16.16 Destruction is also an acceptable method of disposal in cases where an object is in extremely poor condition, has high associated health and safety risks or is part of an approved destructive testing request identified in an organisation's research policy.
- 16.17 Where necessary, specialist advice will be sought to establish the appropriate method of destruction. Health and safety risk assessments will be carried out by trained staff where required.
- 16.18 The destruction of objects should be witnessed by an appropriate member of the museum workforce. In circumstances where this is not possible, e.g. the destruction of controlled substances, a police certificate should be obtained and kept in the relevant object history file.