



# Collections Documentation Plan

June 2023

*Name of museum:*

**The Nicholson Museum & Art Gallery**

**The Nicholson Institute**

**Leek**

**Staffordshire Moorlands ST13 6DW**

*Name of governing body:*

Staffordshire Moorlands District Council

Moorlands House

Stockwell Street

Leek

Staffordshire Moorlands ST13 6HQ

*Date on which this plan was approved by governing body:*

**Insert date.**

*Plan review procedure:*

This plan will be reviewed annually.

*Date at which this plan is due for review:*

**Insert date.**

## 1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Nicholson Museum & Art Gallery Collections Development Policy and Documentation Policy describe its commitment to the continuing development and review of the collections and collections information.

1.2 The aim of this plan is to improve the documentation system of the Nicholson Museum & Art Gallery collection so that it meets the minimum standard for collections documentation as defined by the Spectrum primary procedures. Spectrum is the UK collections management standard developed by the Collections Trust.

## 2.0 The Documentation System and Spectrum

2.1 The Nicholson Museum & Art Gallery implements the Spectrum primary procedures. These form the basis of an accountable documentation system. The Spectrum primary procedures are:

- Object entry
- Acquisition and accessioning
- Location and movement control
- Inventory
- Cataloguing
- Object exit
- Loans in
- Loans out
- Documentation planning

## 3.0 Analysis of current shortfalls in the primary procedures with actions for improvement

3.1 The documentation policy describes how each of the primary procedures listed above is implemented. The tables below identify shortfalls and actions required to bring each procedure up to the minimum standard.

### 3.1.1 Object entry

Requirement	Achieved	Shortfall	Action required
You can account for all objects left in your care.	Yes		
You have clear terms and conditions for accepting objects into your care.	Yes		
You record why objects have been left with you.	Yes		
You schedule the default return of objects to the owner if they are not to be acquired or loaned.	Yes		

You record who legally owns objects left with you.		Staff have previously accepted objects without asking about legal ownership	Inform all staff that they should not accept any items without consulting the Cultural Services Officer
You assess and mitigate any potential risks to people or other objects from incoming objects.	Yes		
You record as much significant information about newly-arrived objects as you can, to be added to in the future.	Yes		
Both you and owners know your liability for loss or damage while objects are in your care.	Yes		
You provide a receipt for owners and get a signature to show they accept your terms and conditions.		Staff have previously accepted objects without issuing a receipt	Inform all staff that they should not accept any items without consulting the Cultural Services Officer
You can uniquely identify newly-arrived objects.	Yes	Except in the circumstances above where an entry form has not been completed	As above

### 3.1.2 Acquisition and accessioning

Requirement	Achieved	Shortfall	Action required
You only acquire objects in line with your agreed policy and applicable laws, treaties and codes of practice.	Yes		
You have written evidence that the undisputed owners of acquired objects have transferred title to your museum.	Yes	Except for historic acquisitions with no original documentation	
You make donors aware of the terms by which their gift or bequest is accepted by you.	Yes		
You give a unique number	Yes		

to each accessioned object and securely label or mark it with this number.			
You keep all relevant information about the acquisition of objects, accessible via their unique numbers.	Yes	Lack of consistency, some information is only available on old records cards	Include on Modes to make it more accessible, link hard-copy resources via reference to accession number
You have a tamperproof record of all accessioned objects, using their unique numbers.	Yes	Except for accession registers pre-2022 which are missing	
As backup you have an up-to-date security copy of all accession records.		Current accession register has no copy, former accession registers missing and only exist as partial photocopy	Copy all records (hard copy and electronic) onto archival quality paper, update regularly

### 3.1.3 Location and movement control

Requirement	Achieved	Shortfall	Action required
You have a system of recording all locations where objects are displayed or stored within your museum.	Yes		
You have the records needed to monitor whether agreed environmental standards are being met.		Tiny tags in use and hand-held instruments available but data collection inconsistent	Devise and implement regular recording schedule and data collection
You record every movement of an object, including the date moved, and change the location record in line with your policy.	Yes		
You can access location information by object number and location name.	Yes		
You record who has moved objects (and who authorised those moves if required).	Yes		
You have as full a history of	Yes	There is very little	Keep records up-

objects' previous locations as practical.		information available about locations pre-2022	to-date from now on
You assess any risks of moving objects (both to the objects themselves and to people) and, where needed, have a written plan to mitigate them.	Yes		
You have appropriate insurance or indemnity cover in place before transporting objects, particularly in the case of borrowed objects.	Yes		

### 3.1.4 Inventory

Requirement	Achieved	Shortfall	Action required
You have met the minimum requirements for all other primary procedures.		See tables for other primary procedures	As listed
From the various records in your system you could, if required, produce a complete list of every object (or group of objects) in your care.	Yes		
Every object (or group of objects) has a unique number securely associated with it, linking your records to the physical items they describe.		Unaccessioned objects are not numbered but their location is recorded on Excel	
If a unique number refers to a group of objects, or one object with several parts, you record the number of individual items.	Yes		
Every object (or group of objects) has a recorded name and brief description (or image).	Yes		
You know the current location of every object (or	Yes		

group of objects) and when it was noted there.			
You know who owns each object (or group of objects) in your care, and how they came to be in your care (eg acquired, on loan).	Yes	Except unaccessioned items with no documentation and historic items that have no original documentation	Research where possible to identify historic acquisitions
If you have more than one type of collection (eg accessioned objects and a handling collection) you know which collection an object belongs to.	Yes		
If you do not currently meet the above requirements, you have an appropriate plan to do so within an agreed time period.	Yes	Lack of capacity	Time period to be reviewed annually

### 3.1.5 Cataloguing

Requirement	Achieved	Shortfall	Action required
You have a catalogue system in place that allows you to record the minimum information needed for the Inventory procedure and, beyond that, supports your cataloguing policy.	Yes		
Catalogue records are linked to the objects they describe via unique accession numbers that are securely associated with the items themselves.	Yes		
Catalogue records cross-refer to relevant information held in your system (whether on paper or digitally) or available elsewhere.	Yes		
Your system can reliably retrieve relevant catalogue information to meet the needs of users.	Yes		

You capture relevant information resulting from other procedures in a timely way.	Yes		
You keep an up-to-date backup of your catalogue records.	Yes		

### 3.1.6 Object exit

Requirement	Achieved	Shortfall	Action required
You can account for all objects that have left your museum for whatever reason.	Yes		
All objects leave with appropriate authorisation.	Yes		
You get appropriate signatures to prove that you have transferred objects into someone else's care.	Yes		
You keep up-to-date location and movement records for objects that belong to you even when they are away from the museum.	Yes		

### 3.1.7 Loans in

Requirement	Achieved	Shortfall	Action required
You have a written agreement signed by you and the lender before any loan begins, with clear reference to the care standards you will meet and other terms and conditions.	Yes		
The reason for each loan is clearly stated.	Yes		
All loans are for fixed periods.	Yes	Except the Royal Collection a permanent	No action required



		loan of 22 items arranged in 1936	
You have appropriate insurance or indemnity cover for borrowed objects while they are your responsibility (including in transit).	Yes	To be arranged on a case-by-case basis	
You have up-to-date information about the location and physical wellbeing of borrowed objects during the loan.	Yes		
You keep a written record of all loans.	Yes		

### 3.1.8 Loans out

Requirement	Achieved	Shortfall	Action required
All loan requests are assessed according to your policy.	Yes		
The reason for each loan is clearly stated.	Yes		
All loans are for fixed periods.	Yes		
You have a written agreement signed by you and the borrower before any loan begins, with clear reference to the care standards they agree to meet and other terms and conditions.	Yes		
Borrowers have appropriate insurance or indemnity for your objects while in their care (including in transit).	Yes		
You keep a written record of all loans	Yes		

### 3.1.9 Documentation planning

<b>Requirement</b>	<b>Achieved</b>	<b>Shortfall</b>	<b>Action required</b>
Review the collections information you already have and agree areas for improvement in the light of your collection management priorities.	Yes		
You have a written documentation plan setting out specific objectives that can be achieved within a realistic timeframe given the available resources.	Yes		
You review progress towards achieving your plan's objectives regularly.	Yes		

#### **4.0 Improving collections information**

4.1 The Nicholson Museum & Art Gallery holds approximately 1500 objects. The collections consist of fine art, decorative arts and crafts, social history, and a few items relating to natural science, world cultures and archaeology.

4.2 Until 1994 none of the museum objects appear to have been accessioned. In 1994 the bulk of the collection, around 850 objects were accessioned and catalogued in Modes. The Modes catalogue and location records were not maintained beyond 2013. Both the accession register and the Modes catalogue had been lost by 2022. Since July 2022 all previously accessioned objects recorded on index cards and newly acquired collection items have been added to a new Modes catalogue.

4.3 There is a small backlog of around 30 objects that were accepted into the collection between 2013 and 2021 that have entry forms but no other paperwork. The processing of these items is a priority.