

The National Gallery's Documentation Policy

Date on which this policy was approved by the Board of Trustees: 17 July 2014

Date on which this policy is due for review: 17 July 2019

Policy Owner: Director of Collections

Introduction

This policy will guide the work of the National Gallery in the field of collection documentation.

Collection documentation is concerned with the development and use of information about the objects within the National Gallery Collection and the procedures which support the management of the collection. The information should be recorded in written or digital form within the Gallery and should be accessible to staff, researchers and the public.

The aim of the documentation policy is to ensure that the Gallery fulfils its responsibilities in relation to security, management and access of collections by:

- Improving accountability for collections
- Maintaining professional standards in documentation procedures and collection information
- Extending access to collection information
- Strengthening the security of the collections

The Gallery's documentation system comprises a mixture of manual and digital records managed mainly by departments within the Collections and Public Engagement Directorates, with technical support from the Information Systems Department. The Head of the Research Centre manages the life cycle of operational records.

The collection management system (currently TMS), is the Gallery's authoritative repository for up to date core information about the collection, loans in and temporary deposits. It is also a tool to assist staff in collection management procedures (acquisitions, exhibitions, loans in and out etc.) and is integrated with other Gallery databases and interfaces, e.g. the collection image database, the staff intranet and the public web site.

Ethics and Legislation

Documentation of the collection will meet the requirements of the following ethical guidelines and legislation:

- Data Protection Act
- Freedom of Information Act
- Museum Association Code of Ethics
- International Council of Museums Code of Ethics

For legislation and guidelines that are relevant to specific procedures such as Loans Out or Acquisitions, see Related National Gallery Policies below

Accountability

The Gallery will maintain a level of documentation that will allow it to identify and locate all objects for which it is legally responsible, including loans in and temporary deposits. A concise catalogue entry with a unique number and current location will be recorded and tracked on the collection management system for each object. All new acquisitions will be entered in a handwritten Accessions Register. Regular inventory checks will be carried out to ensure that the Gallery can locate any object. Collection documentation will be audited regularly.

Standards

The Gallery is committed to following SPECTRUM, the UK Collections Management Standard and in particular the minimum standard for the primary procedures:

- Object Entry
- Acquisition
- Loan In
- Loan Out
- Location and Movement Control
- Cataloguing
- Object Exit
- Retrospective documentation

Procedures will be documented and made available to staff in the most appropriate way, e.g. the staff intranet.

Access to Collections Information

The Gallery is committed to ensuring that documentation of its collection allows for access to information by staff, researchers and members of the public. The information will be accessible by many routes, e.g. direct access by staff to electronic systems, the staff intranet, public enquiries and visits to the Gallery, the public website and printed publications. The Gallery will aim to meet the information needs of diverse audiences and reduce barriers to learning about and enjoying the collection.

Security of Collections Information

The Gallery will ensure the physical security of the records in its documentation system and the long term preservation of those records, including regular backup of digital data. Access to internal electronic systems will be controlled and only staff members who have received appropriate training and guidance will use them.

Keeping Records Up to Date

Collection documentation will be kept as up to date as possible and readable. Data will be migrated from electronic systems that are in danger of obsolescence to more current systems. This will be done in a timely and orderly way that causes as little disruption as possible to the daily operations of the Gallery and its public-facing information.

Related National Gallery policies

The following policies support specific areas of the Documentation policy in more detail. All are available to staff on the intranet through the document library. All except no. 1 are also available to the public through the Gallery's website.

1. Policy on the Use and Protection of Collection Information May 2006
2. Collection Development Policy July 2014
3. Acquisitions Risk Management statement 2013
4. Due Diligence for Loans Policy July 2008
5. Loans Out Policy 2013
6. Loans In Risk Management Statement January 2014
7. Loans Out Risk Management Statement January 2014
8. Intellectual Property Rights Risk Management Policy March 2012
9. Records Management Risk Management Policy September 2011
10. Information Risk Management Policy April 2011
11. Information Systems Risk Management Policy 2011
12. Freedom of Information Policy 2007
13. Laptop/Mobile Device Risk Management Policy 2011