

**STAFFORDSHIRE
ARTS & MUSEUM SERVICE**

DOCUMENTATION POLICY
May 2001

1. POSITION STATEMENT

The primary objective of Staffordshire Arts and Museum Service is the care and long-term preservation of the Staffordshire County Museum collection. To this end Staffordshire Arts and Museum Service recognises the importance of good documentation practice, and undertakes to maintain Museum Documentation Association (MDA) and Registration standards.

2. AIMS OF THE DOCUMENTATION POLICY

- 2.1 The Policy will cover the documentation of objects (including two-dimensional printed, painted and drawn material) and photographs, which are entering or leaving the Arts and Museum Service's collections under the Terms of the Acquisition and Disposal Policy, and Loans Out Policy.**
- 2.2 Step by step details of the Arts and Museum Service's documentation procedures are to be found in the Documentation Procedural Manual.**

3. PRESENT STATE OF DOCUMENTATION

- 3.1 Theoretically, all items within the Arts and Museum Service's collection are marked, have an accession card, and are entered in the Museum Accession Registers. In practice, there is a small part of the collection which has not been accessioned, but this backlog is being steadily reduced. A detailed breakdown of the backlog is provided in Section 12.**
- 3.2 The objects catalogue (numbering over 26,000 items) is on a computer database, Dbase III. Two sets of back-up disks are kept: one in the Staffordshire Arts and Museum Service offices, the other in a secure County Council location off-site. A computer network system is being developed to give all curatorial staff access to this catalogue. The computer catalogue is supported by a card index catalogue and associated history files.**
- 3.3 The photograph catalogue, containing an estimated 40,000 images, is at present not computerised. It is intended to transfer this information onto a suitable database, and scan the images to link them with the database records.**

4. DOCUMENTATION RESPONSIBILITIES

- 4.1 Overall responsibility for the management of the County Arts and Museum collections lies with the County Arts and Museum Officer.**
- 4.2 Responsibility for the documentation of the collection lies with the Assistant Keeper: Documentation.**

5. ENTRY RECORDS

- 5.1 All objects or groups of objects received by the Arts and Museum Service should**

immediately be entered in the Entry documentation.

- 5.2 **A Museum Documentation Association (MDA) approved Entry Form must be completed. Since January 1996, the Arts and Museum Service has used the Entry Form produced by MDA and East Midlands Museum Service; this form also establishes legal title to the object(s).**
- 5.3 **An Entry register containing a complete run of Entry forms is maintained.**

6. EXIT RECORDS

- 6.1 **All objects or groups of objects leaving the Arts and Museum Service, either permanently or temporarily, should immediately be entered in the Exit documentation.**
- 6.2 **An MDA approved Exit Form must be completed.**
- 6.3 **An Exit register containing a complete run of Exit forms is maintained.**

7. MOVEMENT RECORDS

- 7.1 **If the location of an object is changed a Staffordshire County Museum Location Change Memo must be completed.**
- 7.2 **Any change of location must be recorded on the Object Database.**
- 7.3 **Inventories of all display and storage areas are compiled and regularly revised.**

8. ACCESSION RECORDS

- 8.1 **The MDA approved Entry Form provides written evidence of the original title to an object and the transfer of title to Staffordshire County Council.**
- 8.2 **A unique number is assigned to each object.**
- 8.3 **Each object is marked and labelled using MDA guidelines.**
- 8.4 **An MDA approved Accession Register is maintained, describing all acquisitions and listing them in numerical order.**
- 8.5 **Information about the acquisition process and background information relating to the acquired object is kept in History Files. Each file should contain a copy of the Entry form and/or a copy of the Transfer of Title form, and a copy of the letter of thanks. It may also contain any other correspondence, receipts, newspaper cuttings, etc.**
- 8.6 **A back-up copy of the Accession Registers is kept off-site, as are back-up disks of the computer database.**

9. INFORMATION RETRIEVAL

9.1 A manual card file index is used for objects and photographs.

9.1.1 The object card file is in accession number order.

9.1.2 The photograph card file is divided into subject headings.

9.1.3 There are also separate card indices for donor name and place of origin. These cover objects and photographs accessioned up to and including 1987. Since computerisation of the object catalogue began in 1987 these indices have not been maintained.

9.2 The object catalogue has been transferred onto a computer database, Dbase III+. It contains the following fields of information: - accession number

- name
- Social History and Industrial Classification number
- (SHIC)
- cross reference (a simple in-house classification system)
- location
- material
- date
- provenance
- maker
- donor name
- donor address
- terms of acquisition

9.3 Indices can be produced for each of the above fields of information, or combinations of them.

10. OUTGOING LOAN RECORDS

10.1 The Loans Out Policy is to be referred to in responding to a request for a loan (see Appendix 1).

10.2 The borrower must meet the Arts and Museum Service's Conditions of Loan.

10.3 An MDA approved Exit form must be completed, ensuring that the loan is for a finite period.

10.4 Loans Out files are used to control the status of outgoing loans and contain correspondence, documentation and other information.

11. INCOMING LOAN RECORDS

11.1 The Acquisition and Disposal Policy outlines the Arts and Museum Service's terms of acquisition for incoming loans.

- 11.2 **An MDA approved Entry form must be completed, ensuring that the loan is for a finite period.**
- 11.3 **Adequate insurance and security must be provided for borrowed objects.**
- 11.4 **Incoming long-term loans should be accessioned as part of the Museum Service's collection, ie numbered, marked, labelled and catalogued.**
- 11.5 **Loans In files contain correspondence, documentation and other relevant information.**

12. **RETROSPECTIVE DOCUMENTATION**

12.1 **There is a small backlog of unaccessioned items (approximately 4% of the total collection) in the following groups:-**

- **pharmaceutical items donated by Mr Ewart Jones**
- **Evode collection of packaging**
- **Stafford Museum and Art Gallery postcards**
- **Stafford Museum and Art Gallery coins and tokens**
- **Agricultural photographs and negatives.**

12.2 **These backlogs are being continuously reduced by the Assistant Keeper: Documentation, with the assistance of student placements and work experience staff.**

13. **FUTURE ACTION**

13.1 **The computerisation of the photograph catalogue is the chief priority. A suitable database is needed to enable easy cross-referencing and indexing. This database will also link in with scanned images of the photograph.**

13.2 **It is anticipated that the backlog of documentation will be eliminated by June 1998.**

**Chris Copp
14th April 1997**

APPENDIX 1

STAFFORDSHIRE ARTS & MUSEUM SERVICE

LOANS OUT POLICY