

THE ROYAL AIR FORCE MUSEUM'S POLICY FOR THE USE OF COLLECTIONS

INTRODUCTION

1. The collections may be used in various ways to pursue the mission of the Museum. Normal uses include display and research; other uses include demonstration, and for reproduction. The purpose of this policy is to control such uses of accessioned material to ensure that the fundamental objective of preserving objects in perpetuity is not compromised and the health and safety of all persons is safeguarded. This policy does not apply to the handling collections of un-accessioned material maintained by the Access and Learning Development Division.

CONTROL OF PUBLIC DISPLAY AND RESEARCH

2. Requests to display or to provide access for research to objects must be referred to the specialist curator of the relevant collections department or his superior, who will consider the health and safety, conservation, environmental and security issues and judge whether the use can be approved and, if so, define the conditions which must be met. When the above issues are judged not to be harmful to either the long term preservation of the object or to the user, the specialist curator may authorise the specific use in accordance with RAF Museum Policies and Procedures, recording details on the Collections Management System where necessary (e.g. location changes). Where a Curator's decision is queried, it should be referred to the Departmental Keeper and then the Director of Collections. Denial of use is to be logged in departmental correspondence files and the Handling/Display/Storage Recommendations field of the CMS record.

3. Original film and photographs will not normally be placed on public display. Original documents and books may be displayed for short periods, provided the environmental and security requirements of BS 5454:2000 are met.

CONTROL OF OPERATION AND DEMONSTRATION OF 3-D OBJECTS

4. **Aircraft and other 3D mechanical artefacts.** Under no circumstances will aircraft be flown or operated on the ground without the permission of the Director General. Aircraft systems, including access doors and canopies, may only be operated and airframes may only be entered with the permission of RAF Museum Aircraft and Exhibits Curators or Technicians for the primary purpose of repair or conservation. All airframe access is to be monitored by the Radiological Safety Officer. The personnel listed above may also authorise the ground handling of aircraft with due precautions to avoid collisions, and the occasional operation of mechanical artefacts, providing the risk to the object and the handlers is assessed and no electric power is used.

5. **Vehicles.** Under no circumstances will engines be operated without the permission of Director of Collections. Before batteries are connected and fuel is replenished systems must be visually checked for electrical and fire safety. A record of operation will be kept in the vehicle log. While long-term preservation of accessioned objects is paramount, occasional use of some objects by authorised members of staff is necessary for the welfare of and access to other parts of the collection. For vehicles which will be used to carry passengers or on public roads, a current MoT certificate is to be in force at the time of operation, adequate insurance must be in place and the

driver of the vehicle is first to obtain the permission of his superior, who must satisfy himself that the driver is competent.

6. **Medals, Clothing and Uniform.** Objects from the Medals, Clothing and Uniform collections will not be worn.

USE OF ARCHIVE AND LIBRARY MATERIAL

7. Access to material in the Archive and Library collections is to be controlled by Department of Research and Information Services (DoRIS) staff authorised by the Departmental Keeper. Museum staff may borrow books from the Library subject to the agreement of DoRIS staff: such books may be recalled for use by other readers.

8. The use of material by visiting readers will be in accordance with Guidelines published in the Reading Room and is to be supervised by members of DoRIS staff. Special supervision may be required for the use of material regarded to be vulnerable.

9. Where material is fragile, frequently used, difficult to handle or otherwise at risk, surrogates (such as microfilm copies) will be consulted rather than the originals.

10. Material that is still subject to security restrictions or confidentiality agreements will only be produced for readers with the agreement of the Keeper of DoRIS or his superior.

CONTROL OF ANALYTICAL RESEARCH OR REPRODUCTION

11. Analytical research involving the dismantling of objects or destructive testing (e.g. to determine material specification) will not be performed without the prior permission of the Director General. Analytical research or reproduction which is performed off the Museum premises will be the subject of a loan-out agreement.

12. Subject to any copyright restrictions which apply, see Intellectual Property Rights Policy (RAFM/11/21/2/25), films, documents and photographs may be reproduced by contractors who have an established record and have been approved by the relevant Departmental Keeper.

13. Filming of books or documents will be supervised by a member of DoRIS staff, who will ensure the material is not put at risk by prolonged exposure to bright lights or inappropriate handling.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR OBJECTS

14. When an object is placed in the hands of a member of staff, the curator responsible is to brief the recipient on the correct method of handling for its continued preservation. When the object is placed in the hands of any other person on the Museum's premises, the responsibility for the object's preservation remains with the curator. When an object is placed on display, responsibility for monitoring the environment remains with the curator and responsibility for its security transfers to the Security Dept. When material is made available for research in the Reading Room, responsibility for its preservation rests with the Reading Room supervisor on duty.

CONSERVATION

15. The conservation needs of objects within the Museum's collections are assessed and treatment is co-ordinated by the Head of the relevant Curatorial Department:

- a. Preventive conservation, such as cleaning and safely storing objects, is undertaken by curators within departments.
- b. Routine conservation of Aircraft and Exhibits is undertaken by the Airframe Technician at RAFM London and by staff at the Michael Beetham Conservation Centre (MBCC) at RAFM Cosford.
- c. Interventive conservation of aircraft is undertaken by the MBCC with the Manager of the MBCC acting as advisor on treatments and handling required. Where necessary, the Manager of the MBCC will choose and monitor external contractors to work with aircraft.
- d. Conservation of all other collections – Medals and Uniforms, Fine Art, Photographic, Film and Sound, Library and Archive – is contracted to qualified professionals drawn from the Conservation Register.

16. During conservation treatment of aircraft and other 3D exhibits, original material is retained wherever possible; material contemporary to the object's production is used as a secondary alternative; and material produced using methods contemporary with the object's production is used as a third alternative.

Documenting conservation treatment

17. All conservation work will be documented in accordance with the Spectrum¹ minimum standard. The following information must be recorded:

- a. The dates the work started and finished;
- b. The type of work (e.g. conservation treatment, condition report, loan condition report);
- c. The action carried out (location, procedure, method, materials used, duration, result);
- d. The reference numbers of any reports, photographs, drawings, or other types of image;
- e. Any new or revised handling, packing, storage and display recommendations;
- f. The packing or support instructions if part of the work;
- g. Any updates to the care and maintenance plan if appropriate;
- h. The date of any follow up care activity if appropriate;

¹ Spectrum: The UK Museum Documentation Standard; ©MDA 2007 p. 122

- i. The new or reproduction parts fitted to an object should be fully documented.
- j. The name of the conservator(s) and organisation as appropriate;
- k. The contact name at the organisation if appropriate.

18. Detailed records are kept of conservation and restoration work carried out in-house by staff at the MBCC and the Airframe Technician at RAFM London which encompass 17 a – i above. These records are retained in the Aircraft History and Maintenance Log Books at RAFM London and the MBCC at RAFM Cosford.

19. Conservation treatment records will **not** be required for the routine preservation of material in other collections, for example binding or microfilming. Where remedial conservation treatment is necessary a treatment report containing the information detailed in paragraph 17 will be sought.

20. All conservation records will be retained permanently.

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Version 4: Approved by the Trustees 25 February 2008