

THE ROYAL AIR FORCE MUSEUM'S POLICY FOR COLLECTION REVIEW

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Name of museum: Royal Air Force Museum

Name of governing body: Trustees of the Royal Air Force Museum

Delegated authority given to the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) by the Board of Trustees for Collections related Policies and Procedures

Date on which this policy was approved by governing body: 2 June 2020

Date at which this policy is due for review: 2 years after approval

INTRODUCTION

Museums are not static organisations. A vital element of their future survival is to ensure the collections with which they are entrusted are developed.

During the course of the last strategic plan, the Museum concentrated its efforts on ensuring that our Collection is relevant, shared and well-cared for. As highlighted in our collection Development Strategy and associated Policy, a comprehensive review of our Collection is ongoing with two aims:

1. The disposal of irrelevant, duplicate or damaged material
2. The identification of areas to further develop the Collection

PRINCIPLES

Collections will be used to achieve our purpose

1. Our vision:

To inspire everyone with the RAF story – the people who shape it and its place in our lives:

Our purpose:

To share the story of the Royal Air Force past, present and future – using the stories of its people and our collections in order to engage, inspire and encourage learning.

Objectives

2. Collection Review enables the Museum to:
 - Improve our knowledge about the Collection
 - Select objects for new exhibitions and displays

- Better understand the significance of the Collection at organisation, regional, national and international level
- Understand the storage and care needs of the Collection
- Develop the skills and expertise of staff, volunteers and external experts through a better understanding of the Collection
- Resolve issues which have arisen from historic and unsystematic approaches to collecting
- Transfer objects from the Core collection to the Support collection to better share the RAF story

Collections will be used effectively to benefit the public

3. Enabling public access now and in the future to the collections is a fundamental role of museums. Public benefit is achieved by using the collections in a variety of ways including display/research/handling/demonstration. This activity may be organised by the Royal Air Force Museum or by organisations to which the Museum lends objects. It is necessary, from time to time, to reassess the collection's potential for public benefit in relation to our purpose, plans and policies, as well as take account of changes to legal and ethical considerations.

Our users will benefit from good collection management practices which improve the potential for the effective use of the collections.

Collection Review will cover a range of options

4. As part of the Review, it is essential for the process to demonstrate continued public benefit. This will be shown in the outcomes which will fall into at least one of options below:

- Identification of gaps in the Collection
- Greater promotion of the Collection both internally and externally, leading to greater research in and use of the Collection
- Better understanding of the significance of an object, its learning potential and user engagement as well as its curatorial value
- Prioritisation of care for some areas of the collection
- Identification of objects of low RAF relevance or duplicate existing holdings in the Permanent collection that could be transferred to the Support collection, as defined in the Collections Development Policy
- Disposal of objects from the Collection in accordance with the Collection Development Policy and MA Disposals Toolkit

Collections review will observe the ethical and legal considerations outlined in the Museum Accreditation standard and the MA Code of Ethics

5. Ethical matters relating to collections review include the process taking place:
- Within a clearly defined Collection Development Policy, where any potential acquisition or disposal is undertaken for sound curatorial reasons

- On the advice of a range of staff from different departments (not one individual) with a range of skills and expertise from across the collection, subject specialisms and audience perspectives
- With the agreement of the Collections Development Committee and the appropriate authority
- With the intention that objects remain in the public domain wherever possible
- Where there is no risk that public trust in museums will be damaged
- When it is likely to increase public benefit deriving from the collections
- When financially-motivated disposal is only implemented in exceptional circumstances.

6. Decisions made relating to collections review may be affected by legal restrictions arising from factors such as:

- Legislation relating to the governing body of the Royal Air Force Museum and its charitable status
- Legislation relating to the Museum's Collection
- The governing constitution of the Royal Air Force Museum
- Royal Air Force Museum management and partnering agreements
- Conditions attached to gifts, donations, bequests, purchases, loans and grants
- The ownership of objects including those not yet accessioned into the collection.

If doubts on legal restrictions exist, appropriate advice will be sought.

ALIGNMENT WITH SECTOR STANDARDS

SPECTRUM minimum requirements

7. The Museum will observe the minimum requirement set by the SPECTRUM standard as follows:

Minimum requirement	How RAF Museum meets requirement
You create and file a written plan for each review that includes the methodology to be followed, the criteria to be assessed and the scoring system to be used	There is an overarching Collections Review Activity Plan. A methodology is applied to each type of assessment and evaluation, including criteria and scoring system
You record the date of each object assessment and the person responsible for a scoring decision	Each assessment is dated from start to finish and the person responsible recorded on the CR Activity Plan.
You record the relevant numbers of each object (or group of objects) assessed	The numbers on each group assessed and evaluated are recorded on the CR Activity Plan.
You add review assessments to your catalogue	Review assessments are held on spreadsheets as no Collections Review module exists in the catalogue. These are easily linked to the catalogue by Object Number. It is feasible for the status of each object to be recorded on the catalogue and we will do so when time and workload allow.
You analyse the results of collection	Collection Assessments are evaluated

reviews and recommend appropriate follow-up action	and reviewed, with recommendations for action recorded at each stage.
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The collection review process and its documentation will take account of the requirements of the Museum Accreditation scheme, the MA Code of Ethics and the guidelines in the MA Disposal Toolkit

8. In addition to ethical and legal matters, the implementation of the collection review process must demonstrate that the requirements have been met and guidelines followed. The process will be different depending on whether objects are to be permanently disposed of from the Collection, whether they have or have not been accessioned into the Collection or are on loan to or from the Royal Air Force Museum. Documentation requirements are detailed in the Collections Information Policy.

The selection of objects for review and the choice of new owner will be subject to formal processes and written criteria with assistance from appropriate specialists

9. Formal processes and criteria will ensure that consistency and transparency in collections review can be demonstrated. Specialist knowledge and advice will support the Museum in making informed decisions on how the public benefit potential of items can be best achieved.

10. The Collections Review and related Collections Review Activity Plan details:

- A description of which area of the Collection are under review
- The questions the Museum is aiming to answer during the review
- The methodology the Museum has implemented to undertake the review
- The resources required to undertake the review
- The timescale for the review
- How the review will be recorded
- Analysis of the results of the review and its outcomes.

Our plans, policies and collection management arrangements will be reviewed and amended as necessary to reflect any changes in our approach to the development and use of the collections

11. Collections review provides an opportunity to review plans, policies and practices relating to acquisition, disposal, loans and other aspects of collections management to ensure that the Collection is being used effectively for public benefit.

Any changes made will be consistent with the prevailing Museum Accreditation standard and with ethical and legal considerations.

MAINTAINING PUBLIC TRUST

Public trust in the museum as holders of the Collection will be maintained by consultation and communication

12. The Museum recognises the need to raise understanding both inside and outside the Museum, of the public benefits arising from collection review. This includes respecting the sensibilities of those who have donated objects to the Museum, special interest groups and other stakeholders.

For consultation

Collections Development Policy (RAF)M/DCM/2/6/3/1)
Dispersal Guidelines (RAFM/DCM/2/6/3/8)

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