

THE ROYAL AIR FORCE MUSEUM'S POLICY FOR COLLECTION REVIEW

CONTENTS	Page no.
PREFACE	2
INTRODUCTION	2
PRINCIPLES	2-4
ALIGNMENT WITH SECTOR STANDARDS	4-5
MAINTAINING SECTOR STANDARDS	5

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Name of museum: Royal Air Force Museum

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

Date on which this policy was approved by governing body: March 2014

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PREFACE

Definition of a Museum

'Museums enable people to explore collections for inspiration, learning and enjoyment. They are institutions that collect, safeguard and make accessible artefacts and specimens, which they hold in trust for society.' Museums Association

Definition of Collections Review

'Improving public benefit by refining collections in line with the museum's statement of purpose.' Shares Museum East

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.

Following the introduction of a new purpose/ambition, the Royal Air Force Museum is undertaking a five-year strategic plan leading to the RAF centenary in 2018, which will include a review of the Collection. This will end with two definite conclusions:

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 ambition:

To ensure that the Royal Air Force's story endures and enriches future generations:

Our purpose:

- We tell the story of the Royal Air Force through its people and collections;
- For our visitors, we make our collections and the RAF story relevant and stimulating;
- For current and former RAF personnel and their families, we preserve, honour and share the stories of their service;
- For our nation, we help people to understand the impact of the RAF on the world.

Collections will be used effectively to benefit the public

2. Public benefit is achieved by using the collections for display/research/handling/demonstration/spares/set dressing. This activity may be organised by the Royal Air Force Museum or by other organisations to which the Museum lend objects. It is necessary, from time to time to reassess collections 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

3. Benefit to the public must be demonstrated in the choice of option made.

Alternatives, not in order of priority are:

- Allocating objects a different use within the Royal Air Force Museum (e.g. Handling Collection, Interpretative Collection, Collections Care/Reference Collection)
- Returning to their owners objects that are on loan to the Royal Air Force Museum where they are under utilised
- Recalling objects on loan to other organisations
- Converting objects on loan to the Royal Air Force Museum to gifts/donations
- Disposal by gift to another Accredited Museum or if this is not possible to other organisations or other appropriate recipient in accordance with the Acquisitions and Disposals Policy
- Disposal by sale to another Accredited Museum or if this is not possible to other organisations or other appropriate recipient in accordance with the Acquisitions and Disposals Policy
- Disposal in cases of restitution, repatriation or spoliation
- Disposal by recycling – e.g. through gifting to a charity shop
- Disposal by destruction – full or partial, in cases where no other option exists

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

4. Ethical matters relating to collections review include the process taking place:

- Within a clearly defined Collections Policy where any potential acquisition or disposal is conducted for sound curatorial reasons
 - On the advice of a range of staff from different departments (not one individual) comprising of at least one curator, at least one member of Access and Learning, at least one member of the Department of Collections Management and at least one member of staff from the Operations division
 - With the agreement of the Trustees in the case of disposal
 - 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
5. 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 collections
 - The governing constitution of the Royal Air Force Museum
 - Royal Air Force Museum management 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

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

6. 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 given in the Documentation 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

7. 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.

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

8. 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 collections are 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 collections will be maintained by consultation and communication

9. 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, other stakeholders and special interest groups.

For consultation

Acquisitions and Disposals Policy (RAFM/DCM/2/6/3/1)
Dispersal Guidelines (RAFM/DCM/2/6/3/8)

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