

Collections Management Framework:

Captain Cook Memorial Museum

Governing Body: The Cook Museum Trust

Approved by Governing Body: 22 September 2012, amended August 2013

Date for review: not later than August 2018

I. Collections Development Policy

1. Statement of purpose:

As set out in the founding Trust Deed, the aim is “to advance the education of the general public by establishing a museum in John Walker’s House, Grape Lane, Whitby, devoted to the display of items relating to the life and achievements of Captain James Cook”. The Trustees interpret ‘general public’ broadly to mean national and international audiences, and to include the education of school children and students.

2. The present collection can be divided into the following subject areas:

Cook’s life in and connections with Whitby

His family

His London connections, early naval career, including work in Canada

His three voyages of exploration

The work of the artists on his voyages

The scientific achievements of his voyages

The lives of those who sailed with him, whether as scientists, artists, officers or
as crew members

Books on early travels and voyages of exploration

The period spans Cook’s life (1728-1779) and Voyages. It can include later periods as those who sailed with him lived longer, and Cook’s reputation changed during subsequent ages. The area comprises the geographical area covered during the course of his life and Voyages.

The collection contains paintings, prints and drawings, manuscripts and documents including letters and charts, models, medals and plaques, furniture and ethnographic material, as well as a library of antiquarian books on travels and voyages containing volumes from the late 16th century to the 19th century.

3. Criteria governing future acquisition policy: criteria for collecting relate to the authenticity, importance and relevance of the item, as well as the space for display. The subject areas listed above will continue to be the focus for collecting. We will continue to collect items relating to these areas, with particular attention paid to filling gaps in the story, or to improving the balance of existing displays.

4. Themes and priorities for rationalisation and disposal: The Museum is fully cognisant of its responsibilities with regard to the MA Code of Ethics, that it holds collections in trust on behalf of society and safeguards the long-term public interest in the collections. Strict control has been exercised over collecting since its foundation, and the Museum is in the fortunate position of not yet having had to confront issues of rationalisation. It will continue to monitor the areas of collecting, the criteria governing future acquisition policy and the collecting policies of other museums to ensure that the collection continues to fulfil the Museum's core purposes. It will also continue to monitor the need for rationalisation in all areas of the collection listed above. This disciplined collecting and continuous care mean that the Museum has hitherto not needed to consider disposal of items in the collection. Should disposal be considered necessary in the future, it will be carefully considered, curatorially-motivated and take place as part of the long-term consideration of the collection. The following curatorial criteria would be used:

- Poor and deteriorating condition
- Falls outside the museum collecting policy
- Duplication

The procedures set out in the MA Disposal Toolkit as detailed below in Section 13 would be followed.

5. Limitation on collecting: the Museum recognises its responsibility in acquiring additions to its collections, to ensure that care of collections, documentation arrangements and use of collections will meet the requirements of the Accreditation Standard. It will take into account limitations on collecting imposed by such factors as levels of staffing, storage and care of collection arrangements.

6. Collecting policies of other museums: the Museum will take account of the collecting policies of other museums and other organisations collecting in the same or related areas or subject fields. It will consult with these organisations where conflicts of interest may arise or to define areas of specialism, in order to avoid unnecessary duplication and waste of resources.

Specific reference is made to the following museums: the Captain Cook Birthplace Museum, the Captain Cook Schoolroom Museum, the National Maritime Museum, and the Whitby Museum.

7. Policy review procedure: The Collections Development Policy will be published and reviewed from time to time, at least once every five years. It will be reviewed in August 2018 and at five yearly intervals thereafter.

The regional ACE will be notified of any changes to the Collections Development Policy and the implications of any such changes for the future of the existing collection.

8. Acquisitions not covered by the policy: Acquisitions outside the current stated policy will only be made in very exceptional circumstances, and then only after proper consideration by the governing body, the Cook Museum Trust, having regard to the interests of other museums.

9. Acquisition procedures:

a) The Museum will exercise due diligence and make every effort not to acquire, whether by purchase, gift, bequest or exchange, any object or specimen unless the governing body or responsible officer is satisfied that the Museum can acquire a valid title to the item in question.

b) In particular, the Museum will not acquire any object or specimen unless it is satisfied that the object or specimen has not been acquired in, or exported from, its country of origin (or any intermediate country in which it may have been legally owned) in violation of that country's laws. (For the purpose of this paragraph "country of origin" includes the United Kingdom).

c) In accordance with the provisions of the UNESCO 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, which the UK ratified with effect from November 1, 2002, and the Dealing in Cultural Objects (Offences) Act 2003, the Museum will reject any items that have been illicitly traded. The governing body will be guided by the national guidance on the responsible acquisition of cultural property issued by Department of Culture Media and Sport in 2005.

d) So far as biological and geological material is concerned, the Museum will not acquire by any direct or indirect means any specimen that has been collected, sold or otherwise transferred in contravention of any national or international wildlife protection or natural history conservation law or treaty of the United Kingdom or any other country, except with the express consent of an appropriate outside authority.

e) The Museum will not acquire any archaeological material.

f) Any exceptions to the above clauses 8a, 8b, 8c, or 8e, will only be because the Museum is either:

acting as an externally approved repository of last resort for material of local (UK) origin; or

acquiring an item of minor importance that lacks secure ownership history but in the best judgement of experts in the field concerned has not been illicitly traded;
or

acting with the permission of authorities with the requisite jurisdiction in the country of origin; or

in possession of reliable documentary evidence that the item was exported from its country of origin before 1970.

In these cases the Museum will be open and transparent in the way it makes decisions and will act only with the express consent of an appropriate outside authority.

g) The museum does not hold or intend to acquire any human remains.

10. Spoliation:

The Museum will use the statement of principles “Spoliation of Works of Art during the Nazi, Holocaust and World War II period”, issued for non-national museums in 1999 by the Museums and Galleries Commission.

11. Repatriation and Restitution of objects:

The Museum’s governing body, acting on the advice of the Museum’s professional staff, if any, the Museum mentor and the advice of professional staff in the appropriate national museum, may take a decision to return objects or specimens to a country or people of origin. The Museum will take such decisions on a case by case basis, within its legal position and taking into account all ethical implications and available guidance. This will mean that the procedures described in 12a-12d, 12g and 12s below will be followed but the remaining procedures are not appropriate.

12. Management of archives: while the Museum does not intend to collect archives, it does hold some documentary material, and its governing body will be guided by the Code of Practice on Archives for Museums and Galleries in the United Kingdom (3rd ed., 2002).

13. Disposal Procedures:

Disposal preliminaries

a) The governing body will ensure that the disposal process is carried out openly and with transparency.

b) By definition, the Museum has a long-term purpose and holds collections in trust for society in relation to its stated objectives. The governing body therefore accepts the principle that sound curatorial reasons for disposal must be established before consideration is given to the disposal of any items in the Museum’s collection.

- c) The Museum will confirm that it is legally free to dispose of an item and agreements on disposal made with donors will be taken into account.
- d) When disposal of a museum object is being considered, the Museum will establish if it was acquired with the aid of an external funding organisation. In such cases, any conditions attached to the original grant will be followed. This may include repayment of the original grant and a proportion of the proceeds if the item is disposed of by sale.

Motivation for disposal and method of disposal

- e) When disposal is motivated by curatorial reasons the procedures outlined in paragraphs 12g-12s will be followed and the method of disposal may be by gift, sale or exchange.
- f) The museum will not undertake disposal motivated principally by financial reasons.

The disposal decision-making process

- g) Whether the disposal is motivated either by curatorial or financial reasons, the decision to dispose of material from the collections will be taken by the governing body only after full consideration of the reasons for disposal. Other factors including the public benefit, the implications for the museum's collections and collections held by museums and other organisations collecting the same material or in related fields will be considered. External expert advice will be obtained and the views of stakeholders such as donors, researchers, local and source communities and others served by the museum will also be sought.

Responsibility for disposal decision-making

- h) A decision to dispose of a specimen or object, whether by gift, exchange, sale or destruction (in the case of an item too badly damaged or deteriorated to be of any use for the purposes of the collections or for reasons of health and safety), will be the responsibility of the governing body of the museum acting on the advice of professional curatorial staff, if any, and not of the curator of the collection acting alone.

Use of proceeds of sale

- i) Any monies received by the museum governing body from the disposal of items will be applied for the benefit of the collections. This normally means the purchase of further acquisitions. In exceptional cases, improvements relating to the care of collections in order to meet or exceed Accreditation requirements relating to the risk of damage to and deterioration of the collections may be justifiable. Any monies

received in compensation for the damage, loss or destruction of items will be applied in the same way. Advice on those cases where the monies are intended to be used for the care of collections will be sought from ACE.

j) The proceeds of a sale will be ring-fenced so it can be demonstrated that they are spent in a manner compatible with the requirements of the Accreditation standard.

Disposal by gift or sale

k) Once a decision to dispose of material in the collection has been taken, priority will be given to retaining it within the public domain, unless it is to be destroyed. It will therefore be offered in the first instance, by gift or sale, directly to other Accredited Museums likely to be interested in its acquisition.

l) If the material is not acquired by any Accredited Museums to which it was offered directly as a gift or for sale, then the museum community at large will be advised of the intention to dispose of the material, normally through an announcement in the Museums Association's Museums Journal, and in other specialist journals where appropriate.

m) The announcement relating to gift or sale will indicate the number and nature of specimens or objects involved, and the basis on which the material will be transferred to another institution. Preference will be given to expressions of interest from other Accredited Museums. A period of at least two months will be allowed for an interest in acquiring the material to be expressed. At the end of this period, if no expressions of interest have been received, the museum may consider disposing of the material to other interested individuals and organisations giving priority to organisations in the public domain.

Disposal by exchange

n) The nature of disposal by exchange means that the museum will not necessarily be in a position to exchange the material with another Accredited museum. The governing body will therefore ensure that issues relating to accountability and impartiality are carefully considered to avoid undue influence on its decision-making process.

o) In cases where the governing body wishes for sound curatorial reasons to exchange material directly with Accredited or unaccredited museums, with other organisations or with individuals, the procedures in paragraphs 12a-12d and 12g-12h will be followed as will the procedures in paragraphs 12p-12s.

p) If the exchange is proposed to be made with a specific Accredited museum, other Accredited museums which collect in the same or related areas will be directly notified of the proposal and their comments will be requested.

q) If the exchange is proposed with a non-accredited museum, with another type of organisation or with an individual, the museum will make an announcement in the *Museums Journal*, and in other specialist journals where appropriate.

r) Both the notification and announcement must provide information on the number and nature of the specimens or objects involved both in the museum's collection and those intended to be acquired in exchange. A period of at least two months must be allowed for comments to be received. At the end of this period, the governing body must consider the comments before a final decision on the exchange is made.

Documenting disposal

s) Full records will be kept of all decisions on disposals and the items involved and proper arrangements made for the preservation and/or transfer, as appropriate, of the documentation relating to the items concerned, including photographic records where practicable in accordance with SPECTRUM Procedure on de-accession and disposal.