



Collections Management Policy

Victoria and Albert Museum, 2009

Version 1.1

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1. **Mission and Objectives**

As the world's leading museum of art and design, the V&A enriches people's lives by promoting the practice of design and increasing knowledge, understanding and enjoyment of the designed world.

The Museum's key strategic objectives are:

- **Access and Audiences** - To provide optimum access to collections and services for diverse audiences, now and in the future.
- **National and International** - To be acknowledged and respected as the world's leading museum of art and design.
- **Creative Design** - To promote, support and develop the UK creative economy by inspiring designers and makers, and by stimulating enjoyment and appreciation of design.
- **Efficiency and Effectiveness** - To operate with financial and organisational efficiency.

2 Statement of Authority

2.1 Statement of Authority

The *National Heritage Act 1983* established a Board of Trustees of the Victoria and Albert Museum. Under the Act, the property in the objects which form the Museum's collections was (with certain exceptions) vested in the Board. So far as practicable and subject to the provisions of the Act, the Board has the authority to acquire, care for, lend and dispose of objects in the collections. The Board delegates the authority to the Director to take operational decisions and, with the assistance of a Management Board, to implement the obligations laid down by the Act. The Director is answerable to Parliament as the Accounting Officer responsible for the proper expenditure of public money granted to the Museum.

2.2 Policy Review Process

This Policy was approved by the Board of Trustees of the Victoria and Albert Museum on 17 September 2009.

Future revisions to the Policy will be referred to the Trustee's Collections Committee for approval, under delegated authority from the Board of Trustees, as approved at the Board meeting of 17 September 2009.

The Policy will be published and reviewed from time to time, at least every five years, and is next due for review on or before September 2013.

The MLA Council will be notified of any changes to the Acquisition and Disposal Policy, and the implications of any such changes for the future of existing collections.

2.3 Policy Implementation

The implementation of the Collections Management Policy is documented in the following:

- Collections Management Procedures Manual
- Collecting Plan, 2004
- Environmental Policy, 1991
- Pest Management Policy, 2004
- Lighting Policy

2.5 Accreditation

The Museum applied and was accepted for full registration in 2005, within the first phase of the Registration Scheme, now the Accreditation Scheme, administered by the Museums, Libraries & Archives Council (MLA). Accreditation is a minimum standards scheme and addresses a number of fundamental questions that the public and funding authorities are right to ask of museums. By registering in this scheme, the Museum affirms its commitment to the adoption of agreed standards and to increasing co-operation and sharing of experience between museums. The Museum expects to participate in the further phases of the scheme.

3 Expertise

- 3.1 Knowledge of the collections is essential for their efficient management and development.
- 3.2 Curatorial staff at all levels have an unrivalled opportunity to study the objects in their care and to develop knowledge not easily acquired by non-Museum staff. Staff accordingly have a duty, as part of their job, to acquire knowledge both of objects in the collection and of the whole field to which the objects relate and to ensure that their accumulated knowledge is retained by the Museum wherever possible. A high level of knowledge and a reputation established by publication will be necessary for senior posts in the management of the collections.
- 3.3 The natural centre for object-based studies will be the collections. It is essential that staff develop expert knowledge about their own and related collections, and are able to provide advice to outside bodies. For Museum projects requiring major periods of research and writing, staff may seek secondment to the Research Department.
- 3.4 The Museum's collections and its network of day-to-day working relationships are international in scope. Curatorial staff, therefore, should have the languages necessary to read the literature of their subject and to communicate orally with foreign scholars. In both the Asian and European collections, the acquisition and improvement of language competence, including the study of ancient languages, may be regarded as a necessary part of a curator's duties.
- 3.5 Designated curators in departments are appointed as Expert Advisers to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and are members of the Advisory Council of the Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art.
- 3.6 The Keeper of the Collection (please see Clause 4.1.2 for list of collection departments) is the natural point of reference in the subject area for all national agencies.
- 3.7 The curatorial staff provide an information service to the public and professionals throughout the country.
- 3.8 It is essential that all curators develop the museological skills necessary to handle, inspect, display, and store the classes of object within their collection. The requirements for security and risk must be thoroughly understood, while striking the appropriate balance with the public's right of access.
- 3.9 Staff in the collections are required to have and develop knowledge of information retrieval and related new technologies, which are increasingly necessary for the efficient management of the collections. Office skills such as word-processing and the use of databases are essential for all curators.
- 3.10 Other management skills, such as financial planning, expenditure control and personnel management, are necessary at all levels from Curator upwards and appropriate training will be provided to meet individuals' needs.

4 Acquisition and Disposal

4.1 Scope of the collections

4.1.1 Object Types

The V&A collects objects illustrating and documenting the history of art and design as exemplified in, amongst others, the fields of books, ceramics, drawings, fashion, furniture, glass, jewellery, manuscripts, metalwork, miniatures, paintings, performing arts, photography, prints, sculpture, silver, tapestries, textiles, toys, watercolours and woodwork. In acquiring objects, the Museum is influenced by its existing collections, but it must always be alive to the possibility of acquiring new types of object resulting from technological and social developments. The Board of Trustees requires that detailed collecting plans for the Museum's collections will be presented from time to time for approval.

4.1.2 The Collection Departments of the Museum

- Asian
- Furniture, Textiles and Fashion
- Sculpture, Metalwork, Ceramics and Glass
- Word & Image
- Theatre & Performance
- V&A Museum of Childhood

4.1.3 Geographical Boundaries

Objects are collected from all major artistic traditions. The Museum does not normally collect pre-European settlement material from the Americas and Australasia. The Museum does not collect historic material from Oceania and Africa south of the Sahara.

4.1.4 Chronological Boundaries

Objects from Europe are collected from 300 AD onwards. There are no time restrictions on objects from the Far East, South and South-East Asia. Pre-Islamic objects from the Middle East are not acquired except for textiles.

The V&A continues to be a dynamic force in acquiring contemporary objects from all cultures and it is the policy of the Board of Trustees to allocate money from both the central and department funds to contemporary objects.

4.1.5 Technological Boundaries

Although objects with mechanical or electronic parts are collected, they are not intended to chart the history of technology. It is therefore not essential for such objects to be in functioning order.

4.1.6 The V&A and other British Institutions

The Museum is the national museum of art and design. In addition, the Board of Trustees recognises that the national heritage is preserved in a network of British museums and other institutions in the public and private sectors. The Museum will take account of the collecting policies of other museums and 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.

It sees its responsibility not only in acquiring objects for the V&A but also in stimulating other institutions to acquire objects. It does this through a network of formal and informal agreements with other bodies, including the V&A Purchase Grant Fund Scheme, about the appropriate placement of an object. The Board of Trustees will consider collaborative purchases with other museums.

4.1.7 National Collections

Within the Museum's collection, the following areas are recognised as having individual national status. This recognition is the result of discussion between individual keepers in national museums.

- Architectural Drawings
- Art of Photography
- British Watercolours and Drawings
- Ceramics
- Commercial Graphics (including Posters)
- Computer Art
- Fashion
- Furniture and Woodwork
- Glass
- Jewellery
- Metalwork (including Silver)
- Museum of Childhood at Bethnal Green: the national collection of childhood.
- National Art Library (NAL): within the overall system of the national libraries, the NAL has responsibility for the literature of art and for the Art of the Book.
- Pastels
- Portrait Miniatures
- Sculpture: the national collection of post-classical sculpture to 1914.
- Textiles
- Theatre and Performance

4.2 Acquisition

4.2.1 Under the *National Heritage Act 1983*, the Board of Trustees "may acquire (whether by purchase, exchange or gift) any objects which in their opinion it is desirable to add to their collections".

4.2.2 To qualify for inclusion in the collections an object must also meet at least one of the following criteria:

Aesthetic

An object should be of great beauty or aesthetic significance; it should be excellent in design or present an elegant solution to a problem of design; it should be a major example of an art form represented in the Museum.

Technical

An object should illustrate a significant development of a specific technique; it should exemplify excellence of craftsmanship; it should increase the understanding of the method of

construction of a particular class of collected objects.

Historical

An object should contribute significantly to the history of the art and design collected by the Museum; it should be a datable work by an important artist or workshop; it should have a significant provenance; it should be associated with an important social, cultural or political event; it should provide evidence of the workings (design, production, marketing) of a specific industry and/or trade; it should be or have been regarded as particularly significant for reasons of style, design or technique.

Documentary

An object should throw light on other objects in the collections; it should provide a record of a way of life; it should reflect the taste of a certain period in a particularly evocative manner.

Completion of Objects

The Museum aims to acquire any object or parts of objects which complete an object already in the collections.

- 4.2.3 To qualify for inclusion in the Theatre and Performance collections artefacts should document the history, craft or practice of the performing arts in Britain.
- 4.2.4 To qualify for inclusion in the collections of the V&A Museum of Childhood artefacts should document the history and culture of childhood.
- 4.2.5 The Museum will not acquire any biological or geological material.
- 4.2.6 The Museum recognises its responsibility, in acquiring additions to its collections, to ensure that care of collections, documentation arrangements and the use of collections will meet the requirements of the Accreditation Standard.
- 4.2.7 The Museum will exercise due diligence and make every effort not to acquire, whether by purchase, gift, bequest or exchange, any object unless it is satisfied that it can acquire a valid title to the item in question.
- 4.2.8 In particular, the Museum will not acquire any object unless it is satisfied that the object has not been acquired in, or exported from, its country of origin (or any intermediate country in which it may have been legally owned, including the United Kingdom) in violation of that country's laws.
- 4.2.9 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 Museum will be guided by the national guidance on the responsible acquisition of cultural property issued by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport in 2005.
- 4.2.10 The Museum will not acquire archaeological antiquities (including excavated ceramics) in any case where the Museum has any suspicion that the circumstances of their recovery involved a failure to follow the appropriate legal procedures.

Any exception to the above will only be because the Museum is either:

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

- (ii) 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
- (iii) acting with the permission of authorities with the requisite jurisdiction in the country of origin; or
- (iv) 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.

- 4.2.11 As the Museum holds or intends to acquire human remains from any period, it will follow the procedures in the 'Guidance for the care of human remains in museums' issued by DCMS in 2005.
- 4.2.12 The Museum will use 'Spoliation of Works of Art during the Holocaust and World War II period: Statement of Principles and Proposed Actions', issued by the National Museum Directors' Conference in 1998, and report on them in accordance with the guidelines.

- 4.2.13 The Museum will also take into account limitations on collecting imposed by such factors as staffing, storage and care of collection arrangements:

Physical Condition

If necessary conservation measures are not feasible, an object will not normally be acquired.

Space

If suitable space is not available and if public access cannot be guaranteed, an object will not normally be acquired.

Resources

The total cost of an object covering the purchase price, transport and handling charges, costs of conservation, documentation, curation, display and storage should be considered when assessing the acquisition of an object.

Copyright

The copyright owner should be identified, wherever possible, and either copyright assigned to the Museum or a copyright licence obtained.

- 4.2.14 It is the responsibility of each Keeper to produce and maintain a plan detailing the scope of the collection for which he/she is responsible and describing the current basis for acquiring further objects for the Museum. (See *V&A Collecting Plan, 2004*).

- 4.2.15 Acquisitions outside the stated collecting policy will be made only in very exceptional circumstances, and then only after proper consideration by the governing body of the Museum itself, having regard to the interests of other museums.

- 4.2.16 Responsibility for all acquisitions is delegated by the Board to the Director and by the Director to the Director of Collections. The exercise of judgement on the suitability of objects for each collection is the responsibility of the Keeper of that collection.

The Keeper will also ensure by consultation, where necessary, with the Director of Collections Services, that the practical implications of each acquisition have been properly considered.

- 4.2.17 Subject to the limitations cited in Section 4.2.2, the Keeper has discretion to acquire objects by gift or bequest, and by purchase up to the limit (as set from time to time by the Director) of the departmental purchase grant, provided that funds from no source other than the departmental

purchase grant are being used. When a purchase involves money from the Central Fund, from Trust Funds, from the Friends or Patrons of the Museum, or from outside funding bodies, including sponsors, authorisation from the Director is required. Purchases over £100,000 require the approval of the Board of Trustees, on recommendation of the Trustees' Collections Committee. The case for such acquisitions will be prepared by the Keeper in consultation with the Director of Collections. Where a gift or bequest is made subject to any condition it should be referred to the Director of Collections.

- 4.2.18 Progress on major purchases is monitored by the Director of Collections and reported to the Management Board and Board of Trustees through the Trustees' Collections Committee. Records of all acquisitions will be monitored by the Director of Collections Services who will report annually to the Management Board and to the Board of Trustees through the Trustees' Collections Committee. The periodic Report of the Board to Parliament will include a section drafted by the Director of Collections on the development of the collections over the period since the last report.

4.3 Disposal

- 4.3.1 By definition the Museum has a long-term purpose and holds collections in trust for society in relation to its stated objectives. The Board of Trustees 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, and will ensure that the disposal process is carried out openly and with transparency.
- 4.3.2 Under the *National Heritage Act 1983*, as amended by the *Museums & Galleries Act 1992*, the Board of Trustees may dispose of an object by sale, exchange or gift, unless specific restrictions apply, only if it falls into one or more of the following categories:
- It is a duplicate of another object.
 - The object is unsuitable for retention and can be disposed of without detriment to the interests of students or other members of the public, i.e. it is no longer relevant or useful to the purpose of the Museum and falls outside the scope of the relevant Collecting Plan.
 - Although not falling into the above categories, an object (including a document) may be given, sold to or exchanged with an institution specified in Schedule 5 to the *Museums & Galleries Act 1992* supplemented by subsequent Statutory Instruments (see Appendix 1). Any object may be disposed of in this manner, notwithstanding a trust or condition, subject to the terms of Section 6 of the 1992 Act.
 - The Board may destroy or otherwise dispose of an object if it has deteriorated beyond usefulness for the purposes of the collections, because of damage, physical deterioration or infestation by destructive organisms and if it cannot be conserved or preserved within a reasonable time scale or with the use of available resources. An object may be disposed of in this manner notwithstanding a trust or condition prohibiting or restricting the disposal of the object.
- 4.3.3 The Board of Trustees, acting on the advice of the Museum's professional staff, may take a decision to return human remains (unless covered by the 'Guidance for the care of human remains in museums' issued by DCMS in 2005) or objects 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 Clauses 4.3.1 , 4.3.4, 4.3.5, 4.3.8 and 4.3.20 will be followed but that the remaining procedures are not appropriate.

- 4.3.4 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.
- 4.3.5 Where an object has been acquired with the aid of external funding 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.
- 4.3.6 When disposal is motivated by curatorial reasons the procedures outlines in Clauses 4.3.8 to 4.3.20 will be followed and the method of disposal may be gift, sale or exchange.
- 4.3.7 In exceptional cases, disposal may be motivated principally by financial reasons. Method of disposal will therefore be by sale and the procedures outlined in Clauses 4.3.8 to 4.3.14 and 4.3.20 will be followed. In these cases the Museum will not undertake disposal unless it can be demonstrated that the all the following exceptional circumstances are met in full:
- the disposal will significantly improve the long-term public benefit derived from the remaining collection,
 - the disposal will not be undertaken to generate short-term revenue (for example to meet a budget deficit),
 - the disposal will be undertaken as a last resort after other sources of funding have been thoroughly explored.
- 4.3.8 Whether the disposal is motivated either by curatorial or financial reasons, the decision to dispose of material from the collections will be taken 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 sources communities and others served by the Museum will also be sought.
- 4.3.9 Any monies received by the Museum 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 MLA.
- 4.3.10 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.
- 4.3.11 Responsibility for disposal from the collections is delegated by the Board to the Director and by the Director to the Director of Collections. The exercise of judgement on the suitability of objects for disposal is the responsibility of the Keeper of the relevant collection. To maintain an adequate safeguard against injudicious disposal a formal disposal board must consider each case. The Director of Collections agrees the composition and date of the Disposal Board. The Board will be convened by the relevant Curator, and consist of the Keeper of the Collection, a relevant subject

specialist, a knowledgeable adviser from a different collection or the Research Department or, if necessary, an outside expert. In addition, the Head of Conservation, where deterioration is the reason for disposal, must agree to disposal. The recommendation of each Disposal Board must be reported to the Director of Collections who will present the result to Collections Group and the Management Board for approval. If the current market value of the disposal is greater than £100,000 it must be presented to the Board of Trustees for approval, on recommendation of the Trustees' Collections Committee.

- 4.3.12 Once a decision to dispose of material in the collection has been taken, priority will be given to retaining the item within the public domain, unless it is to be destroyed. It will therefore be offered in the first instance, by gift or sale, to accredited museums likely to be interested in its acquisition.
- 4.3.13 If the material is not acquired by any accredited museum 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 material, normally through an announcement in the Museums Association's Museums Journal, and in other specialist journals where appropriate.
- 4.3.14 The announcement relating to gift or sale will indicate the number and nature of 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.
- 4.3.15 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 Museum will therefore ensure that issues relating to accountability and impartiality are carefully considered to avoid undue influence on its decision-making process.
- 4.3.16 In cases where the Museum wishes for sound curatorial reasons to exchange material directly with accredited or unaccredited museums, with other organisations or with individuals, the procedures in Clauses 4.3.1, 4.3.4, 4.3.8 and 4.3.11 will be followed as will the procedures in Clauses 4.3.17-4.3.20.
- 4.3.17 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.
- 4.3.18 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.
- 4.3.19 Both the notification and announcements must provide information on the number and nature of the 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.

4.3.20 Full records will be kept of all disposal decisions and the items involved and retained in perpetuity within the Museum archive. Proper arrangements will be 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 the SPECTRUM procedure on deaccession and disposal.

4.3.21 Routine disposals from the National Art Library.

The Keeper of the Word & Image collection is formally authorised to dispose routinely and systematically of material which falls into the following categories, without needing to convene a disposal board to consider individual cases:

- Superseded issues of directories, almanacs, timetables, yearbooks, and similar reference works which are issued on a regular basis, so that previous issues are entirely superseded by successive ones, whose primary focus is not art-related, and whose subject content is such that long-term retention of outdated issues is not felt to be desirable. Directories which relate primarily to the art world, artists, galleries, or museums will normally be kept, as they may be useful to researchers in years to come.
- Superseded editions of bibliographies and other reference works which are acquired primarily as working tools for the NAL or one of its sections (e.g. national listings of books in print, lists of publishers or booksellers).
- Duplicate copies of reference material or periodicals, which are acquired for the Library's working needs but which have served their purpose and are either no longer required, or superseded by later issues.

4.3.22 Titles for disposal must be approved by the Keeper and a list of such titles must be maintained. Disposal cycles will be recorded on the NAL catalogue.

5 Documentation

- 5.1 A museum collection includes both the physical collection and its related documentation. This information, consisting of historical and scientific data, is the principal research tool in any museum. In addition, collections management activity generates operational data. All collection activities have documentation components.
- 5.2 The standard of documentation is one determining factor for the value of a collection to the Museum and its audience. Access to the collections is facilitated by proper record keeping.
- 5.3 Documentation must conform to requirements of accountability and be available for inspection by the Museum's auditors.
- 5.4 An accessions record must be created for all material added to the permanent collections, describing each item and listing them by Accession Number. Where accessions data are held in computer databases, there will be provision to produce printed lists.
- 5.5 A printed accessions record will be produced annually, which records the formal acceptance of items into the Museum's permanent collection, authorised by the acquiring Keeper.
- 5.6 Written evidence relating to each acquisition is stored in a registered file containing all information and documentation about the acquisition process.
- 5.7 A catalogue record adhering to agreed Museum-wide data standards (including all mandatory data items) should be created as soon as possible after the object has been accessioned. The history of each object and a record of any activities associated with it must be kept.
- 5.8 Documentation must be correct and up-to-date. Any changes to the collection records should be made promptly and be adequately monitored.
- 5.9 A note of gaps and backlogs of documentation is maintained by the Documentation and Collections Management Services section and a programme to complete cataloguing gaps is in place and progressed as resources permit.
- 5.10 Appropriate indexes to object records should be provided.
- 5.11 The Museum is compiling a record of images of each object. A photograph of each new accession (other than books, archives, and some other works on paper) should be taken and a copy of the image attached to the catalogue record.
- 5.12 Object documentation should conform to appropriate national and international standards wherever possible.
- 5.13 Access to object information will be provided to visitors to the Museum. Such access will take into account the confidentiality or security implications of some types of information. Access to information will also be provided to remote users using electronic communications where possible.
- 5.14 Documentation must be physically secure. Paper based records should be made using archival quality materials. Duplicate records should be made and maintained at a separate site from the originals. Where documentation is held in computer systems, a copy should be kept in a secure place, protected from fire and water.

- 5.15 It will be the responsibility of the Keeper of each collection to ensure that this policy is followed by all staff. It will be the task of the Director of Collections Services to monitor record keeping across the Museum. The NAL will follow the procedures laid down by the Keeper of the Word & Image collection.

6 Inventory

- 6.1 Entry and exit documentation is maintained for all objects entering and leaving the Museum, recording the source of the item, the terms of receipt and the location of the item. This includes special collections in the NAL, but excludes other acquisitions by (and staff library loans from) the NAL.
- 6.2 Each separate part of every Museum object should be marked or labelled with a unique identifying number. For certain types of material (e.g. individual issues of periodicals), the NAL and Theatre and Performance collection do not assign a unique identifying number.
- 6.3 Inventory records provide accountability for any object, at any point in time. An automated inventory of the collections is the primary tool for this purpose. The inventory for the Museum is managed by the Collections Information System (CIS). A separate system is used for the NAL.
- 6.4 The Collections Information System (CIS) provides the information about the collections to be available to collections managers, researchers, educators, presentation staff and the public. It provides the necessary functions for the systematic stockcheck of the collections.
- 6.5 Inventory records should contain an up-to-date and specific (i.e. to the level of case or shelf) record of the object's location, whether temporary or permanent, for all items for which the Museum is accountable.
- 6.6 Inventory records will contain an accurate record of an object's status, i.e. correctly located, missing, on loan, lost or disposed of.
- 6.7 Inventory records will maintain details of the date of each object movement and a record of the person responsible for the movement of the object. No object movement is complete until a record of the move has been completed. The record of object location will be retained so that a history of location of each object can be built up. The Keeper in charge of the collection is responsible for the inventory record of the object.
- 6.8 The Documentation and Collections Management Services section is responsible for carrying out random checks of inventory data to ensure the accuracy of the documentation and the physical presence of the object. Specified areas of the collections are systematically audited at intervals and remedial action taken by the Keeper of the relevant collection following the identification of missing or wrongly-documented objects.
- 6.9 The appropriate length of time to locate and retrieve an object will vary according to collection type and it will be the task of the Keeper of each collection to define and monitor this period of time.
- 6.10 The Registrar is responsible for co-ordinating the Museum's response to any damage or loss of objects from the collections. The Keeper of each collection is responsible for ensuring that staff are informed of the procedures to report loss.

7 Care of Collections

- 7.1 The collections of the Museum are cared for and maintained in conditions intended to preserve and extend their physical integrity. The Museum has established minimum standards of physical care and regular schedules for maintenance of collections.
- 7.2 Conservation and maintenance schedules reflect public access requirements, research and exhibition needs, funding and staff resources, and urgency of care.
- 7.3 It is the responsibility of the Keeper of each collection, in collaboration with conservation staff and specialists concerned, to monitor collections and assess their condition. They recommend schedules for preventive and remedial conservation, reviewed by the Head of Conservation, who decides on an overall conservation strategy and programme for its implementation.
- 7.4 Each object is examined to assess its condition when it first enters the Museum.
- 7.5 Objects are stored or displayed in prescribed, secure areas. Entry to the stores is restricted to those with agreement from the relevant curatorial staff. The public may make appointments to see objects within the stores.
- 7.6 The management of archive collections is guided by the relevant paragraphs in *A Code of Practice on Archives for Museums and Galleries in the United Kingdom* (Standing Conference on Archives and Museums, 3rd edition, 2002) and the *Standard for Record Repositories* (Historical Manuscripts Commission, 3rd edition, 2001).

7.7 Environmental Conditions

- 7.7.1 Objects should be housed in conditions as prescribed by the *V&A Environmental Policy (1991)*. Any new development within the Museum must provide conditions that conform to this policy.
- 7.7.2 Any movement of an object should result in its being placed in matching or improved environmental conditions.
- 7.7.3 All sensitive objects should be enclosed within cases or placed within air-conditioned galleries.
- 7.7.4 Objects should be illuminated only when it is necessary for display or study; at these times the illumination should be not more than that needed for the task.
- 7.7.5 No unnecessary radiation (such as ultra-violet) other than visible light should fall on objects during normal display and storage.
- 7.7.6 The internal space of the Museum should be properly insulated from external conditions.
- 7.7.7 All areas of the buildings must be kept clean at all times, with particular care taken in the disposal of foodstuffs.
- 7.7.8 Any new scheme in the Museum should include provision for environmental monitoring.
- 7.7.9 Objects within the Museum must be protected from any vibration or shock that would place the object at risk of damage.

7.8 Pest Management

A rigorous pest management regime has been established and must be maintained to ensure that all animal pests are kept under control:

- 7.8.1 No woollen felt should be used on any Museum site.
- 7.8.2 All fresh flowers and pot plants entering the buildings should be sprayed beforehand as laid down in Museum contracts.
- 7.8.3 Monitoring on a regular basis must be carried out in all risk areas.
- 7.8.4 It will be the responsibility of the relevant Keeper to establish a regime for checking objects in the galleries and stores for which he or she has responsibility (see *Collections Management Procedures Manual*) and to advise the Director of Collections Services on immediate or potential environmental problems.

7.9 Transport and Movement

- 7.9.1 All objects will be handled and moved by staff who are trained and competent to do so. Where objects are handled by non-Museum staff, the Registrar will ensure that the standard of care meets minimum agreed standards.
- 7.9.2 All object movements will be assessed to ensure that the correct arrangements and resources are present, so as to minimise the risk to the object and to staff.
- 7.9.3 The structure of the building should be checked prior to the movement of any heavy load.
- 7.9.4 All transport arrangements will be made in accordance with Government Indemnity guidelines, and will be appropriate to the nature of the object, its value and fragility, and the possible risks involved in the journey. The Registrar will be consulted about transport arrangements to or from the Museum estate.
- 7.9.5 Objects will be packed or protected by staff who are trained and competent to do so. Where objects are packed by non-Museum staff, the Registrar will ensure that the standard of care is equal to our own.

8 Access

8.1 The Museum seeks to make its collections as widely available as possible to the public. Access to the collections for research and for public enjoyment is facilitated through permanent galleries, temporary exhibitions, reference facilities and publications, the Museum website, selected third party websites, and other electronic media.

8.2 Study Collections

Study Collections of works of art on paper, books and textiles are accessible through a number of study facilities listed below. Study Rooms provide mediated access to certain collections.

Collections marked with an asterisk (*) below indicate access is by appointment only.

- The Prints and Drawings Study Room (South Kensington)
- The National Art Library (South Kensington)
- RIBA Architecture Study Rooms (South Kensington)
- V&A Archive (Blythe House Archive & Library Reading Room)*
- Archive of Art & Design (Blythe House Archive & Library Reading Room)*
- Beatrix Potter Collections (Blythe House Archive & Library Reading Room)*
- Theatre and Performance Archive (Blythe House Archive & Library Reading Room)*
- Textile Study Rooms (South Kensington)
- Indian and South-East Asian Study Room (South Kensington)*
- V&A Museum of Childhood Study Room (Bethnal Green)*

Reserve collections of European and Asian sculpture, metalwork, ceramics and glass, furniture and woodwork, are also available for viewing and study by appointment with the relevant department.

8.3 Temporary Exhibitions

Temporary exhibitions allow objects not normally on display in the permanent galleries to be shown to the public. This also allows objects to be displayed in different contexts and alongside objects borrowed from other collections.

8.4 Loans

8.4.1 Short and long term loans allow objects from the collections to be shown to the public elsewhere in the UK and internationally. Such loans also allow objects to be displayed in different contexts and alongside objects from other collections.

8.4.2 Appropriate levels of access are monitored and approved by the Keeper and staff of the collection, who have the right to refuse or terminate access at their discretion in order to protect the collections. It is the Keeper's responsibility to set out and publish regulations to govern access. Methods and speed of access are monitored by the Director of Collections.

8.4.3 Access to materials at the V&A Museum of Childhood is monitored and controlled by the Director of that Museum.

8.4.4 Facilities may be provided for close inspection of objects, providing it is justified and the object is not placed at risk. Special arrangements will be considered for visitors with disabilities.

9 Information Services

9.1 The Museum will ensure that all information is processed in accordance with relevant statutory requirements, including the Data Protection and Freedom of Information Acts.

9.2 Access to information about the collections is provided in the following ways.

9.3 Galleries

9.3.1 Labels in the galleries are an immediate source of information available to the public about specific objects. Every effort will be made to keep these relevant and up to date.

9.3.2 Object labels are supplemented by wall text and other contextual and complementary information.

9.3.3 As galleries are refurbished electronic multimedia information services are provided, where appropriate, giving access to information about the objects and themes within the galleries and access to information about other objects in this and other museums as appropriate.

9.4 Enquiries

9.4.1 More detailed information is provided at various levels in the records of the collections, through catalogues (printed or unpublished) and through registers and indexes.

9.4.2 Public information systems on the collections, through the provision of automated catalogues or indexes, will enable users to survey the contents of the collections as well as going directly to the objects. It is the Museum's expectation that this form of access to information will increase whereby a linked photographic image of each object will act as the first line of inquiry for the use of visitors, thereby reducing wear and tear on objects.

9.4.3 Requests for general information can frequently be answered by the provision of bibliographies or bibliographic advice. Only at high levels of research is personal consultation with the curatorial staff appropriate.

9.5 Distant access

The Museum intends to provide electronic access to object documentation that is accessible by the public remotely (via the World Wide Web or other means).

9.6 Publications

Publications (including electronic media) provide a means of making extended information about the collections available to the public, which includes those unable to visit the Museum or able to visit only infrequently.

9.7 Photographs

9.7.1 The V&A has an active and ongoing programme of photographing collection objects and making the images available through the Museum website. These images may be downloaded free of charge for the purposes of private use and study, and where the publication has a one-time print run of under 4,000 copies, and falls into one of the following categories: academic/educational/scholarly/student theses/critical editorial use/Charity, Society and Trust newsletters. The full terms and conditions of use are published on the V&A website.

9.7.2 Images for commercial purposes, which fall outside the categories listed in 9.7.1, may be supplied and licensed through V&A Images.

10 Risk Management and Security

10.1 Policy Statement

Risk management requires thoughtful and continuous review of potential hazards which may include fire, theft, flood, bomb/explosion, tremor/subsidence, gale/hurricane/storm, failure of vital supply, war/riot, deliberate damage/vandalism and accidental damage. These events can cause partial or total damage or loss. The Museum will take steps to avoid the likelihood of such events occurring and to minimise their impact should they occur.

10.2 Loss prevention

- 10.2.1 It is the responsibility of the Director of Projects, Design and Estate to take steps for the avoidance of fire and to provide a security regime to safeguard objects on all Museum sites. All staff must adhere to the instructions laid down by the Safety and Security Committee regarding the issue and care of keys.
- 10.2.2 Measures to prevent the likelihood of flood and interruption of vital supplies such as power and water, are the responsibility of the Director of Projects, Design and Estate.
- 10.2.3 Objects within the collections must be kept secure from theft and vandalism. A range of protection and security systems are installed to mitigate these risks. Objects on display are routinely examined by staff from the relevant collection and warders. Visitors within stores must be supervised.

10.3 Building work

It is the responsibility of the Head of Estate to inform the relevant Keeper of any building activities which may put the collections at risk. It will be the duty of the Keeper to ensure that adequate protection is carried out before operations commence. Contractors within the Museum buildings must comply with the *Standard Conditions governing work on the V&A Estate*. Any member of staff who sees a contractor contravening these regulations should inform the Visitor Services & Facilities Department at once and they will stop the work and change the method. If the contractor's operations are likely to cause an immediate risk then the work should be stopped at once.

10.4 Special Events held in Museum buildings

It is the responsibility of the Director of Public Affairs and the Managing Director of V&A Enterprises to inform the Keeper of the relevant collection of any special or corporate event within galleries or stores.

10.5 Objects in transit

It is the responsibility of the Registrar to ensure that all safeguards have been taken to minimise risks for objects in transit between Museum sites and external organisations.

10.6 Loss reduction

- 10.6.1 The Museum Emergency Response Plan aims to ensure swift, appropriate action is taken in the event of any emergency. All staff will be briefed on arrival on the Museum's emergency procedures, which will be displayed in each space where staff work or objects are stored, as well

as on the staff intranet.

10.6.2 The Museum Emergency callout lists will be regularly reviewed and updated by the Safety and Security Committee.

10.6.3 It is the responsibility of the Keeper of each collection to ensure that any damage occurring to an object within the collection is properly recorded and remedial action taken promptly. A central record of object damage will be held by the Registrar or the collection as appropriate.

10.6.4 In the event of theft, or attempted theft, the Control Room must be informed immediately and the Registrar will co-ordinate the Museum's response and maintain a central record.

10.7 Indemnity and Insurance

10.7.1 V&A objects on the premises

Objects from the collections are not covered by Government Indemnity whilst on the premises or in transit for purposes other than loan, and the Museum may not cover them by insurance. They are held at the Government's own risk. The DCMS offers a loose undertaking to reimburse the Museum for loss or damage but is unlikely to look favourably on small claims or any claim where there is evidence that the Museum has failed to take due care. The Museum will therefore pay particular attention to risk management in all collections management activities.

10.7.2 Lending

Objects lent for the public benefit to domestic borrowers may be covered by the Government Indemnity Scheme provided the Registrar is satisfied that standards of care, security and fire prevention will as far as is reasonably practicable ensure the safety of the objects on loan. This will be achieved by means of specific Loan Agreements, by the use of experienced fine art agents, and through consultation with the Museums Security Adviser. Where these standards are met, non-national borrowers will be asked to accept minimum liability for the loan, and may be required to insure against this. Objects lent to other National Museums and Government Departments will be lent under the same conditions, but at the V&A's own risk.

Objects which are lent overseas may be covered either by that country's indemnity or by commercial insurance. It is the responsibility of the Registrar to ensure that the insurance or indemnity provides the appropriate level of cover and that care, security and fire prevention standards are met.

Loans which are not eligible for Government Indemnity will be covered by commercial insurance by the borrowers.

10.7.3 Borrowing

The Museum applies on an individual basis for indemnity for objects valued at over £300 lent to the Museum, where these are eligible for such cover. In return, the Museum will take the same reasonable care of such objects as it would of its own collections. In particular, the Registrar will vet all transport arrangements in order for indemnity to apply.

The Registrar is responsible for the annual reporting of contingent liabilities to the DCMS and for liaison with the Department regarding the interpretation of the Government Indemnity Scheme.

11 Lending

- 11.1 Under the *National Heritage Act 1983*, the Board of Trustees may lend, subject to the provisions of the Act, any object the property in which is vested in the Board. The Board may also lend objects from restricted collections.
- 11.2 The authorisation of the loan of individual objects up to £1,000,000 in value is delegated by the Board of Trustees to the Director and by the Director to the Director of Collections. The loan of any object with a valuation of £1,000,000 or over, or of a controversial nature, or which forms part of a collection subject to restrictive conditions, requires the approval of the Board of Trustees on the recommendation of the Trustees' Collections Committee.¹ The administration of all loans is the responsibility of the Registrar.
- 11.3 All practical arrangements are made through the Loans Section, which holds a central record of all lending and ensures the conformity of arrangements to an agreed standard.
- 11.4 No object may be lent unless it is in a suitable condition to be moved. A conservation inspection and a condition report must be completed for each object lent, before its departure and on its return.
- 11.5 A photographic image of every object lent should be held by the Museum.
- 11.6 The general conditions under which the Museum will lend objects are stated in the V&A's Standard Loan Conditions (see *Collection Management Procedures Manual*).

11.7 Short-term Lending

- 11.7.1 The exercise of judgement on the suitability of a loan request rests with the Keeper of the relevant collection, with advice from departments responsible for the preparation of the objects for loan on the condition of objects and the availability of resources. The Collections Group is responsible for reviewing loan requests that are to be refused. Where an object is on display in an Art and Design Gallery or the British Galleries, the Keeper in charge of that gallery is consulted.
- 11.7.2 The following criteria will be used to assess a loan request:
- the condition of the object to be lent, having regard to such matters as fragility, size and exhibition record;
 - the degree of risk in making the loan;
 - the effects of the loan on the interests of the V&A's own visiting public;
 - the suitability of the borrowing institution; and
 - the status of the exhibition to which the object would be lent, and the object's significance to the theme and purpose of the exhibition.
- 11.7.3 Before agreement to the loan is given, information about proposed loans will be checked against existing commitments to ensure that they will not conflict with internal operations, such as planned exhibitions, research, education and publication programmes or conservation schedules.

¹ An Agreement made on 27 April 1998 between the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport and the Board of Trustees requires that the Board carries out certain functions with regard to these objects on the Secretary of State's behalf. The Agreement enables the Board to "lend objects temporarily for exhibition elsewhere than on the Museum's premises.

11.7.4 The Museum will normally expect the borrower to cover all the marginal costs of lending. These will include mounting, framing, photography, packing, transport and installation. Non-UK borrowers will be asked to pay for any conservation work. All costs will be agreed as part of the Loan Agreement.

11.7.5 The Museum will determine whether to courier objects sent on loan according to the following considerations:

- the rarity, significance and fragility of the object
- any special handling or installation requirements
- the anticipated professionalism of staff at the venue
- the number of objects in the consignment
- the value of the consignment.

11.8 Long-Term Lending

11.8.1 The Museum allows lending for longer periods as a means of making parts of its collections not on display more widely available to the public.

11.8.2 The exercise of judgement on the suitability of the loan to any given venue rests in the first instance with the Keeper of the relevant collection, with advice from departments responsible for the preparation of the objects for loan on the condition of objects and the availability of resources.

11.8.3 The Museum will normally send a courier to oversee the initial installation of the object at the venue, according to the criteria at 11.7.5 above.

11.8.4 The loan will normally be reviewed every three years. Valuations will be updated and confirmation sought that the appropriate insurance or indemnity arrangements are in place and that the conditions of loan continue to be satisfied.

11.8.5 Borrowers will be asked to complete an annual stock check and send a report to the Registrar confirming the location and valuation of all borrowed items.

11.8.6 The Museum will arrange a rolling programme of inspections to venues holding long-term loans from the Museum.

11.9 Touring Exhibitions

11.9.1 A 'touring exhibition' is a complete exhibition, or a major part of one, initiated and prepared by the Museum and including significant information, in the form of label texts, information panels and catalogue entries, in addition to items from the collections and objects borrowed from external lenders. Arrangements for such touring exhibitions are not regarded as routine and will be individually negotiated.

11.9.2 The delivery of touring exhibitions is the responsibility of the Head of Exhibitions and Loans, who will advise the Director in order to seek, as necessary, the agreement of the Board of Trustees, on the recommendation of the Trustees' Collections Committee.

11.9.3 Administration of touring exhibitions, including co-ordination between collections, preparation of object lists, catalogue texts and the preparation of invoices, will be the responsibility of the Head of Exhibitions and Loans.

11.9.4 The conditions under which the Museum will lend objects from its collections will be clearly stated in a contract.

12 Borrowing

- 12.1 Under the *National Heritage Act 1983*, the Board of Trustees may borrow objects from other public institutions or private individuals for the purposes of temporary exhibition, study, or for long-term display in permanent galleries.
- 12.2 Authority for the acceptance of long-term loans is delegated by the Board to the Director and in turn to the Director of Collections who should be consulted about all loans other than those for exhibitions. It is the policy of the Museum to accept loans that will be used for temporary exhibitions or permanent display and study only.
- 12.3 Responsibility for the overall administration of incoming loans, including those for temporary exhibition, rests with the Director of Collections Services. Detailed arrangements for receipt, registration and indemnity are the responsibility of the Registrar in consultation with the relevant collection or with the Exhibition Department as appropriate. A central record of all borrowed objects and their valuations for indemnity will be kept by the Registrar. All communication with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) on indemnity and other matters related to loans will be the responsibility of the Registrar.
- 12.4 The exercise of judgement on the suitability of an object to be borrowed by the Museum for display or study rests in the first instance with the Keeper of the relevant collection. In the case of loans for temporary exhibitions the exercise of judgement will rest with the curator of the temporary exhibition and Head of Exhibitions and Loans.
- 12.5 No object should be borrowed unless it is in a suitable condition to travel and be displayed or used for purposes as defined in the Act. A conservation inspection and a condition report must be completed on all incoming objects, agreed with the lender, and checked on departure by both parties. A receipt agreeing that the object has been returned in unchanged condition should be obtained at the end of the loan period.
- 12.6 No conservation should normally be carried out on objects borrowed for temporary exhibitions. In the event of unforeseen deterioration or emergency the permission of the owner must be obtained, preferably in writing, before any treatment is carried out.
- 12.7 A photograph must be taken of any incoming object on arrival at the Museum.
- 12.8 All loans taken into the Museum are governed by specific terms and conditions included in a loan agreement that makes clear the respective responsibilities and rights of owner and Museum. The following principles will govern such agreements:
 - The Museum should be able to terminate or reduce the length of the loan.
 - The financial valuation, the description of the object and its condition shall be agreed from the outset.
 - The Museum shall undertake to care for the object in the same way as for the objects that it owns and to obtain the owner's prior agreement to any interventive conservation.
 - The owner shall undertake not to enter into negotiations for the sale of any object while it is in the Museum.

- The Museum shall request that the owner shall not exploit commercially the fact that any object is or was on loan to the Museum.
 - The Museum may require the reimbursement of costs incurred if any object is withdrawn before the end of an agreed term of years. Such reimbursement shall reflect costs of storage, conservation, maintenance, curation and work necessarily undertaken (e.g. listing or cataloguing) to make the object usable. In the case of any dispute between Museum and owner the contract should provide for referral to an independent arbitrator.
- 12.9 All long term loans are reviewed every three years and should be returned if it is no longer possible or appropriate for the objects to be on display or otherwise accessible to the public.

Appendix 1 Institutions Listed in Schedule 5 of the Museums and Galleries Act, 1992

Part I

TRANSFERORS AND TRANSFEREES

The Board of Trustees of the Armouries
The British Library Board
The Trustees of the British Museum
The Trustees of the Imperial War Museum
The Board of Governors of the Museum of London
The Board of Trustees of the National Gallery
The Board of Trustees of the National Galleries of Scotland
The Board of Trustees of the National Library of Scotland
The Trustees of the National Maritime Museum
The Board of Trustees of the National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside
The Board of Trustees of the National Museums of Scotland
The Board of Trustees of the National Portrait Gallery
The Trustees of the Natural History Museum
The Board of Trustees of the Science Museum
The Board of Trustees of the Tate Gallery
The Board of Trustees of the Victoria and Albert Museum
The Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England ²

Part II

TRANSFEREES ONLY

Historic Royal Palaces ²
The Court of Governors of the National Library of Wales
The Council of the National Museum of Wales
The Trustees of the Ulster Museum
The Trustees of the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum
The Board of Trustees of the National Museums and Galleries of Northern Ireland ³
The National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty ²

² Added by Statutory Instrument No.2955, with effect from 23 Nov 2000

³ Added by Statutory Instrument No. 613, with effect from 1 Apr 1998