Documentation Policy

Author: Samantha Bannerman (Museum Manager)

Name of museum: The Dundee Museum of Transport

Name of governing body: The Dundee Museum of Transport.

A Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation, established December 2015.
The Museum is located at Unit 10, Market Mews, Market Street, Dundee, DD1 3LA. The Museum is preparing to develop Maryfield Tram Depot, Forfar Road, Dundee with the intention of making this site its permanent home for display and storage of its collections.

Date on which this policy was approved by governing body: 15.02.2017

Date at which this policy is due for review: 15.02.2022

Policy review procedure:
The Documentation Policy will be published and reviewed from time to time, at least once every five years.

Museums Galleries Scotland will be notified of any changes to the Documentation policy, and the implications of any such changes for the future of collections.

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1. Introduction

The Documentation Policy of The Dundee Museum of Transport (DMofT) will guide the work of the museum in the area of collections documentation. Collections documentation is understood as the recording and management of data associated with the objects in the care of the museum.

Documentation will underpin all aspects of museum activity. Recording information is vital in ensuring and improving DMofT's accountability for the collection, and in guaranteeing and strengthening the collection's accessibility, management, research, security and long term preservation.

The DMofT has been collecting objects and archive material since 2010. The systems for documenting the collection have evolved since then with the purchase of object entry forms in 2014 to ensure that each object was documented on entry to the museum. Prior to 2014 the museum used its own 'in-house' entry forms and had intermittently made use of a daybook. In addition to paper based information about collections, a collections database with details relating to objects in the collection has also been in use since 2014. These processes and procedures have been applied to collections documentation with the intention of achieving Accreditation standards.

This is the first formal Documentation Policy of DMofT. In developing this Policy, existing procedures have been reviewed, and additional procedures have been identified. The procedures have then been collated and merged in order to produce a Documentation Policy that is appropriate for DMofT, encourages organisational sustainability, meets the Accreditation standard, and is SPECTRUM compliant.

The Policy will formalise the DMofT's guiding principles in relation to documentation, and will allow these to be communicated to and employed by key stakeholders of the DMofT, including the Board, volunteers, and staff.

2. Aims and objectives

The aim of the Documentation Policy is:

- To ensure that DMofT fulfills its responsibilities in relation to security, management and access of the collection.

DMofT will achieve this by tackling the following objectives:

- Improve accountability for the collection and the management of related data.
- Maintain at least minimum professional standards in documentation and seek to attain the very highest standards wherever possible.
- Develop access to collection information.
- Strengthen the security of the collection. DMofT is committed to maintaining at least the minimum level of collections documentation that allows it to identify and locate all items for which it is legally responsible, including loans.
- Develop a Documentation Plan and procedural manuals that are informed by the Documentation Policy.

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3. Ethics and legislation

Collections information will be recorded in compliance with all legal requirements, including the Data Protection Act (1998) and the Freedom of Information Act (2000).

Collections information will be acquired, stored, managed and used in compliance with the Museum Association's Code of Ethics for Museums and to SPECTRUM Standards (the UK Collections Management Standard).

4. Documentation standards

DMofT is committed to maintaining at least the minimum level of collections documentation that will allow the museum to identify and locate all items for which DMofT is legally responsible, including loans.

Correspondingly, DMofT is committed to following SPECTRUM, and to meeting the minimum standards for the SPECTRUM primary procedures in relation to:

- Object entry
- Acquisition
- Location and movement control
- Cataloguing
- Object exit
- Loans in
- Loans out
- Retrospective documentation

Internal standards and targets that DMofT wish to additionally strive to achieve include:

Object Entry:

- Every object has documentary proof of legal title that also meets ethical standards.

Acquisition:

- All new collections material will be accessioned within 3 months of the decision to acquire.

Cataloguing:

- Every object has an accession number that is labelled or otherwise marked on the object.

- Every object has an accession number which uniquely identifies the object with that register entry.

- All new accessions will have inventory level descriptions on the collections database within 6 months of the accession date.

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- Every accessioned object has an accurate record in the appropriate Accessions Register.

Retrospective Documentation:

- Every object has a robust link with all associated documentation.

Location and movement control:

- Every object has an accurate and up-to-date record of location.

All board members, volunteers, and staff responsible for recording and documenting collections information must firstly receive the necessary training in the relevant data standards, paper based documentation systems, and collections database, to enable accurate and consistent input and retrieval of collection information. Staff will not be granted access to the collections database if they have not received this training.

All data entered onto the collections database will be traceable through an audit trail function within the collections database, showing who created or modified such data.

5. Access to collections information

DMofT is committed to providing access to the collection and its related information for learning, creativity and enjoyment. It is committed to offering the widest and most appropriate forms of access to collection information, expertise, facilities and services. DMofT will support access to collections information for staff, researchers and the wider public in the following ways:

- **For staff:** direct access to collections information held on the collections database or other paper based files (if trained) or indirect access via the Museum Manager and Collections Team.
- **For researchers:** access to collection information (where it complies with Data Protection) via DMofT's facilitation of public enquiries programme; via facilitated visits or longer research placements/programmes as appropriate; access to online collection information via DMofT website, or through independent collection websites supported by DMofT.
- **For general public:** access to collection information (where it complies with Data Protection) via DMofT's facilitation of public enquiries programme; via facilitated visits or longer research placements/programmes as appropriate; access to online collection information via DMofT website, or through independent collection websites supported by DMofT

6. Security of collections information

DMofT is committed to ensuring the physical security of collection records in its various documentation systems (paper based and digital) and the long-term preservation of those records, including a regular back up of electronic data and security copying of key records such as Accession registers.

The collections database is backed up at least once per month to an external hard drive.

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The hard drive is then stored separately from the archive computer in a metal filing cabinet in the museum store room.

The Accession Register is kept on-site in the archive room which is locked unless a member of the Collections Team is working in this area. A second security copy is kept in a metal filing cabinet in the downstairs museum store.

Both the white and blue copies of the Object Entry forms are held in the archive room.

Data entry and procedural data management is carried out in accordance with detailed guidelines written in the museum's documentation procedural manual.

User access rights are tailored on an individual basis so that users only have access to the parts of the system and the information that they require for their job role. Only trained members of the Collections Team have access to edit the CMS.

7. Keeping records up to date

DMofT ensures that paper and electronic records, and security copies of them, are regularly checked to make sure that they are not becoming obsolete. DMofT is committed to ensuring that the museum's documentation is kept up-to-date and readable.

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