

RUSSELL-COTES



HOUSE • GALLERY • GARDEN



Documentation Policy and Plan

2021 - 2026

Documentation Policy and Plan

Agreed by [*ie Management Committee etc*] on [*Date*]

Review by 2026

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1. Introduction

This Policy and Plan builds on previous such documents. Although much progress has been made in this area in recent times at the RCAGM much remains to be done. Good collection documentation is not only a professional and ethical obligation it also allows the RCAGM to make the most of its collections leading to better public engagement and stewardship.

This document is a requirement of the ACE Accreditation scheme and its contents should be considered within that context, but it also aims to fulfil the purpose of the RCAGM as defined by its Statement of Purpose and 'Core Offer' (see Appendix 1). This document will include all the various elements of the RCAGM's collection information system: Accession Registers, Entry/Exit Forms, Object History Files and the Modes Complete Database. See the RCAGM Documentation Procedural Manual for further details.

It should be noted that various pieces of legislation influence this document, chiefly the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 2018 It is an aim of the RCAGM Documentation Policy and Plan 2021-2026 to make achieving these legal obligations easier and more efficient.

The RCAGM Documentation Policy and Plan 2021-2026 aims to meet the relevant requirements set down in the Museum Association's Code of Ethics and the Collection Trust's SPECTRUM standards.

This document will refer to the RCAGM's Collection Development Policy, its Documentation Procedural Manual and its Conservation Policy and Plan.

2. RCAGM Documentation Policy

Good collection documentation is not only mandated by sector best practice, but it is essential to the efficient and effective operation of any museum. It is only through good collection information can the museum manage, care for, and use the material in its care.

Not only do we have a duty of care towards our collection which can only be carried out through good documentation but as a charitable body we must be accountable for what we hold in trust for the public, their benefit and future generations.

As such the RCAGM will aim to achieve the highest standard of sector best practice when it comes to collection documentation (SPECTRUM). Simultaneously, it will also make all possible effort to tackle the outstanding legacy issues it faces in this area. These are the subject of the Action Plan set out below.

All relevant staff are expected to follow the stipulations set down in the RCAGM Documentation Procedural Manual.

Every opportunity must be taken to maintain, update and improve the RCAGM's collection information.

Progress in achieving the objectives set down in the Action Plan will be monitored and reviewed periodically. If necessary, the Action Plan will be updated and altered in the light of changing events.

3. Review of Current Situation

In 2005-2010 the RCAGM received Renaissance in the Regions funding to inventory and digitise its entire collection, both on display and in store. This allowed the museum to create a Modes database of what it had in its possession and where it was held in the most basic terms.

From 2007 onwards the RCAGM's historic paper records were added to the Modes database as part of that process. This allowed reconciliation of the material found without accession numbers to be matched back to its proper provenance. As a result, we now have a better understanding of the scope of material in our possession without provenance. We now also understand what items that our historic paper records state we should have that have not been found.

Due to time pressures and the priority to complete the inventory project it was decided to record the objects found to only the most basic level possible and not to SPECTRUM standards.

Additionally, the paper sources, such as accession registers, which were used to create database entries were, for the most part, historic and therefore not to SPECTRUM standards either.

As a result, except for records that have been improved for key projects such as the PCF Dorset Catalogue, the majority of RCAGM database entries do not meet SPECTRUM.

This problem is particularly acute when it comes to dimensions and photography with physical condition and material more patchily recorded overall. It is estimated that 28,000 Modes records out of a current total of 46,000 fail to meet SPECTRUM. The work to reconcile what the accession registers state the RCAGM holds and what the inventory discovered continues but other paper sources, such as the Loans Out records, still need to be inputted. It is very likely that some of the material still unaccounted for was placed on 'permanent loan' to other institutions such as the Red House Museum, Christchurch (Hampshire Cultural Trust). Some 2D artworks were placed in the Picture Borrowing Scheme and subsequently not recovered when the scheme was wound up in the 1990s.

Currently there are approximately 15,000 items that were found during the inventory that have not been matched up to an accession register entry. There are approximately 8,000 accession register entries which have not been matched to an object.

Following the resolution of the above the RCAGM will be in a position to finalise the reconciliation issues surrounding the collection, re-accessioning as required, but that is beyond the life span of this planning document.

4. Collection Documentation Sources

The paper and digital sources of information regarding the RCAGM’s collection are:

- 1907 Inventory of East Cliff Hall.
- Circa 1906 card index system of paintings in the ownership of the Russell-Cotes’
- Circa 1907 photographs of the interior of East Cliff Hall.
- Sir Merton Russell-Cotes’ autobiography ‘Home and Abroad’.
- Lady Russell-Cotes’ books ‘Westwards from the Golden Gate’ and ‘Letters from Russia’.
- Press articles, such those produced by the Museums Association and The Art Journal prior to 1921, held in various books of cuttings which run to the 1980s.
- Bournemouth Borough Council Minutes (1921-1979) recording the activities of the Art Gallery and Museum Sub Committee (includes reports to them by the curator).
- Historic insurance valuation documents by Christies.
- Photograph albums compiled by RCAGM staff (1960s-1980s)
- The RCAGM accession registers (1921 to date).
- Loans registers and files.
- The RCAGM Bulletins (published 1921-1983¹) and other publications such as the Souvenir Guides (published 1930s-1950s).
- Object History Files (1921 to date).
- Collection identification and condition surveys.
- Exhibition catalogues (1921 to date).
- Modes Complete database.

5. Documentation Action Plan

Action Plan Objective	Action Plan Work Package	Staff/Volunteer	Date
Category 1			
Photographs, dimensions and condition details added to all Modes missing them (SPECTRUM failure)	All objects on display measured/condition details and photographed. To include framed dimensions of 2D items.	DW and RCAGM Photo Volunteer	2021/2022
	Photographs and measurements/condition details added to Modes records of all paintings and 2D artworks stored on site at RCAGM that do not have them.	DW and RCAGM Photo Volunteer	2022/2023

¹ Post 1956 the publication of RCAGM Bulletins became spasmodic with the last one published in 1983.

	Photographs and measurements/condition details added to Modes records of all material in Room 7 (Strongroom) at Study Centre.		2023/2024
	Photographs and measurements/condition details added to Modes records of all material in Room 6 (metalwork) at Study Centre.		2024/2025
Conduct regular audits of store and display areas	Audit in two upstairs rooms and in two downstairs display spaces at RCAGM		Annually
	Audit in one storage location in each room at XR		Annually
Tackle the identification issues around world cultures and far eastern collections.	Bring in an expert to review/survey all completely unidentified world cultures collection items (approx. 300 items). Give a significance assessment.		2022/2023
	Bring in an expert to review/survey all unidentified African collection items (approx. 200 items). Give a significance assessment.		2023/2024
	Bring in an expert to review/survey all unidentified Japanese/Chinese 'oriental' collection items (approx. 200 items). Give a significance assessment.		2024/2025
Photographs taken of Accession and Loans Registers	Photograph all remaining Accession Registers and place images on server.		2021
	Photograph all Loans Registers and place on server.		2022

Deal with RCAGM Strong Room (LG8) issue.	Separate collections from items of house fixtures and fittings. Catalogue, pack the latter and place in RCAGM Tank Room (A2) with rest.		2024
Category 2			
Deal with legacy paperwork issues at RCAGM and XR.	Sort and file backlog of old Collections Office paperwork inc. sending relevant items to DHC or Bournemouth Library		By 2025
	Send 2000 HLF restoration archive to DHC.		Review by 2026
Insurance valuations	Insurance valuation by Sotheby's of European sculpture		2023
	Insurance valuation of furniture.		2024
Category 3			
Input into Modes all Loans Out information from Loans Registers and begin process of chasing down material left on 'permanent loan' with borrowers.	Input Loan Register No. 1 years 1921-1967		2024
	Input Loan Register No. 2 years 1968-1976		2025
	Input Loan Register No. 3 years 1999-2004		2026

Appendix 1

The RCAGM's Statement of Purpose

Our Vision is that the RCAGM will be the internationally acclaimed cultural flagship for Bournemouth and beyond. This is achieved via our 'Mission' which is delivered via our 'Core Offer'.

Our Mission is to inspire and enrich the lives of Bournemouth's residents and visitors by creating a cultural flagship around a unique house and internationally important collections in line with our Founder's Deed of Gift (initially set down in 1908 and put into effect in 1921).

Our Core Offer in a country rich in heritage and museums, the RCAGM stands out as a unique and exceptional place.

The RCAGM was originally known as East Cliff Hall and was purpose-designed and built as the home of Sir Merton (1835-1921) and Lady Russell-Cotes (1835-1920) and to display their extensive personal collection of art and artifacts.

East Cliff Hall, which is part-Italianate, part-Scottish baronial in style, was completed in 1901. The building and its contents were gifted to the people of Bournemouth in 1908 and new art galleries were added in 1919 and 1926. The Russell-Cotes collections, especially strong in European and Japanese arts, have been retained virtually complete and in context. The house is the sole example in Bournemouth of an upper middle-class Victorian/Edwardian residence that survives complete with original contents, room fittings and decorations. It is now Listed II*.

In addition, we have had the privilege of 100 years of additional donations inspired by the generosity of the Russell-Cotes and we have been active in collecting as an institution - responding and reacting to our Founders' collections.

The relationship between the collection and its setting in the historic house is what is of great importance and makes the museum of 'exceptional' significance.

The RCAGM is an outstanding celebration of late-Victorian/Edwardian collectors; their passions and achievements; how they lived and encountered the world; and how they presented their collections or art and artifacts to enrich the lives of others.

We are entrusted to present the Russell-Cotes' personal vision and legacy in the most authentic way possible, and to enable learning, enjoyment and access to the house and collections for residents and visitors to Bournemouth.

Our Core Offer is focused on the historic building, East Cliff Hall, its stunning seafront setting, and its internationally known collections, which attract and astound visitors. However, this is only part of the offer. In addition to the original house, we also have four art galleries added in the early 1900s. We will use this offer to:

- Explain the story of the Russell-Cotes, the Victorian /Edwardian house and world cultures/art collections, putting it into local, national and international contexts.
- Encourage use of the galleries, collections, and unique energy and atmosphere of the house to inspire great art, create dialogues and to stimulate creativity and curiosity.
- Explore aspects of the human condition, which were recognised by the Victorian innovators, philanthropists and social reformers, and which matter to communities today.

Index of Documents

- (1) Forward Plan
- (2) Action Plan
- (3) Risk Assessment of Security (*Confidential*)
- (4) Emergency Plan (*Confidential*)
- (5) Collections Development Policy
- (6) Documentation Policy and Plan**
- (7) Disposals Plan
- (8) Documentation Procedure
- (9) Loans Policy
- (10) Collections Care and Conservation Policy
- (11) Collections Care and Conservation Plan
- (12) Audience Development Plan
- (13) Access Policy
- (14) Access Plan
- (15) Interpretation Strategy
- (16) Exhibition Policy