

RUSSELL-COTES

HOUSE • GALLERY • GARDEN



Documentation Policy and Plan

2024 - 2029

Documentation Policy and Plan

*Agreed by the Russell-Cotes Art Gallery & Museum Management
Committee on 28 October 2024*

Review by 2029

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1. Introduction

The Russell-Cotes holds its collections in trust for the public. Recording collection information is central to being accountable for the collections, to enable them to be effectively managed, to ensure their accessibility and to enable their use for research, exhibitions and programming.

This policy will guide the work of Russell-Cotes Art Gallery & Museum in the field of collections documentation.

The aim of the documentation policy is to ensure that the museum fulfils its responsibilities in relation to security, management and access of collections

- Improve collections knowledge
- Improve accountability for collections
- Maintain at least minimum professional standards in documentation
- Extend access to collection information
- Strengthen the security of the collections

This policy should be considered in the context of the Statement of Purpose and Core Offer (see Appendix 1) and should to be used in conjunction with Collections Development Policy, Documentation Plan, Documentation Procedures, Collections Care & Conservation Policy and Plan, Access Plan, Audit Policy and Damage and Loss Policy.

2. Ethics and Legislation

We will comply with all relevant legislation chiefly the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 2018.

The RCAGM Documentation Policy and Plan 2024-2029 aims to meet the relevant requirements set down in the Museum Association's Code of Ethics and the Collection Trust's SPECTRUM standards.

3. Definition

Collections documentation is all the information that we collect, create, hold and maintain about our collection and/or collected items. This information can include a broad range of knowledge, such as interpretation, stories, research and recorded conversation.

4. Principles

- We will be fully accountable for all objects that enter or are already with the Museum both accessioned and unaccessioned.
- We will create and maintain up to date information to the highest possible standards.
- We will ensure that legal ownership and copyright or copyright permission are

obtained and recorded for all newly accessioned items, and that due diligence paperwork is created and maintained.

- Items will be documented so that we know the permanent or temporary locations of all items held by the Museum.
- We will respect and protect the confidentiality of the data in our care.
- We will undertake regular reviews of the collection management database to ensure it is fit for purpose and that collection information is appropriately safeguarded against potential future obsolescence of the system.
- Every opportunity will be taken to maintain, update and improve the RCAGM's collection information within its resources.
- The RCAGM understands that other voices and viewpoints, beyond those of its staff, can have validity and, where appropriate, and required it will accommodate them within its collection documentation system.

5. Accountability

The museum will maintain a level of collections documentation which will allow it to identify and locate all items for which it is legally responsible, including loans.

- Each object in the collection should have an entry record or equivalent.
- Each object in the collection should be entered in the accessions register and have assigned a unique identifying accession number. In the case of objects on temporary inventory numbers, such numbers must be entered into the Modes database.
- Each object in the collection should be marked or labelled with its accession number in accordance with SPECTRUM.
- Records will be kept detailing the location and movement of all objects in the collection; exit records (i.e. loan out receipts, deaccession records) must be kept for any object that leaves the museum premises.
- Collection records must be securely stored. A duplicate record should be maintained at a separate site from the original as a security measure. Automated data must be backed up regularly.
- Where there are incomplete or absent records, the museum will develop a plan to address and eliminate the backlog. See Documentation Plan
- The curatorial staff has responsibility for the creation, maintenance and enhancement of collections records. The Curator has responsibility for the systems and platforms on which these records are made accessible for management and public use and for monitoring the updating of records.
- Procedures for the auditing of records are outlined the Audit Policy.

6. Standards

SPECTRUM: The UK Collections Management Standard sets out a series of procedures to ensure good practice in all aspects of documentation for collections management. Accreditation requires that the minimum standards for the SPECTRUM primary procedures are met.

The Russell-Cotes is committed to meeting SPECTRUM, the UK Collections Management Standard primary procedures:

- Object Entry
- Acquisition
- Loan In
- Loan Out

- Location and Movement Control
- Cataloguing
- Object exit
- Retrospective Documentation

In addition RCAGM will ensure that new collections material will be accessioned and inventory level descriptions will be added to Modes as soon as possible but not later than three months after the acquisition date.

Object Entry

- Deposits of material will be accepted for the following purposes:
 - Accessioning into the collections
 - Loan for display
- An Object Entry form will be completed and signed by the depositor and a museum signatory for all items, or group of items entering the museum.
- The item or group of items will be identified with an entry number. A record of the entry will be made on Modes if accessioned.
- A deposit will be returned once the loan period, for display, has ended.
- Objects should not be left with the museum without the curator's prior agreement. This includes for identification, consideration for acquisition or loans.

Acquisition

See 5 - Collections Development Policy.

Loans In and Out

See 9 - Loans Policy.

Location and Movement Control

A record of up-to-date locations must be maintained for all objects in the collection via Movement Tickets and added to Modes to meet minimum standards. A record of all previous locations of an object should be maintained on the Modes database, to act as an audit trail. Where staff or volunteers move an object and are unable to update a location they must inform the curator of its new location. For any report of loss, the Damage and Loss Policy will be followed.

Cataloguing

New acquisitions will be catalogued on the Modes database as soon as possible and within not more than three months after acquisition.

Each record will include:

- Accession number
- Acquisition method
- Acquisition source/vendor
- Physical description
- Condition (as assessed by the curator)
- Current location
- Material (where practical)
- Measurements (where practical)
- Simple name

- Photograph (where practical)

Object Exit

Object exit occurs as a result of:

- Return of unwanted gifts
- Return of loans in
- Loans out
- Deaccession / disposal (including destruction of the object)

The original object entry form should be completed for all objects exiting the museum, and is signed by a member of the Curatorial Team and the remover.

Exit forms to be issued for all RCAGM collection items leaving its possession temporarily or permanently. Where an object is exiting due to the start of a loan out, a loan out form should be completed.

7. Retrospective Documentation

RCAGM aims to achieve SPECTRUM standards in its collection documentation.

It aims to tackle the outstanding legacy issues it faces in this area. These are the subject of the Action Plan set out below.

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.

8. Access to Collections Information

- RCAGM is committed to providing public access to collections and collections information, while ensuring that security and preservation of the collections are not compromised.
- Providing access to detailed catalogue information, including images, increases access while reducing unnecessary handling of original objects, and will be encouraged.
- RCAGM enables access to collection information for staff, researchers, academics, volunteers, artists, student placements and the general public.
- All exhibition text will be added to the object record on Modes.
- RCAGM will endeavour to capture any research carried out on objects by either staff or external researchers and add this to the object record on Modes.
- Donor contact details, location, valuation and other sensitive areas will not be made available to the public. Access to this information will not be included in any online search facilities.
- Access may be made through the museum's collection management system (Modes) or appropriate 3rd party online catalogues (eg Art UK). Appropriate security measures (i.e. only selected fields are accessible) have been built into computerised systems that are made available to the public.
- All relevant legislation relating to freedom of information, Data Protection and copyright will be adhered to.

9. Security of collections information

Digital Collections information is recorded on the museum's collection management system (Modes). This is backed up by BCP Council on a regular basis at a remote site. The museum will make sure all physical information held in accession registers and

object history files is held securely.

10. Keeping records up to date

The museum will endeavour to regularly check paper and electronic records, and security copies of them, to make sure that they are not becoming obsolete.

11. Expertise and Advice

RCAGM is committed to continuing development of its staff and to the building of relevant knowledge and expertise. Only people who have received training from the Curator will be able to edit Modes.

Caring for the collections is the responsibility of all staff. All relevant staff must follow the stipulations set down in the RCAGM Documentation Procedural Manual and are to be held accountable to them.

12. 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.

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.

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 recording requirements.

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 21,000 Modes records out of a current total of 46,800 fail to meet SPECTRUM.

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 be found.

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.

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. Some 2D artworks were placed in the Picture Borrowing Scheme and subsequently not recovered when the scheme was wound up in the 1990s and remain at large¹.

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.

13. Collection Documentation Sources

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

- a. 1907 Inventory of East Cliff Hall.
- b. Circa 1906 card index system of paintings in the ownership of the Russell-Cotes’
- c. Circa 1907 photographs of the interior of East Cliff Hall.
- d. 1908 Deed of Gift document between the Russell-Cotes’ and Bournemouth Corporation
- e. Sir Merton Russell-Cotes’ autobiography ‘Home and Abroad’ (1922).
- f. Lady Russell-Cotes’ books ‘Westwards from the Golden Gate’ (1899) and ‘Letters from Russia’ (1908).
- g. 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.
- h. Bournemouth Borough Council Minutes (1921-1979) recording the activities of the Art Gallery and Museum Sub Committee (includes reports to them by the curator). This body approved all acquisitions for the collections.
- i. Historic insurance valuation documents by Christies.
- j. Photograph albums compiled by RCAGM staff (1960s-1980s)
- k. The RCAGM accession registers (1921 to date).
- l. Loans registers and files (1921 to date).
- m. The RCAGM Bulletins (published 1921-1983²) and other publications such as the Souvenir Guides (published 1930s-1950s).
- n. Object History Files (1921 to date).
- o. Collection identification and condition surveys.
- p. Exhibition catalogues (1921 to date).
- q. Modes Complete database.

¹ There are about 360 works unaccounted for.

² Post 1956 the publication of RCAGM Bulletins became spasmodic with the last one published in 1983

14. Documentation Action Plan

Action Plan Objective	Action Plan Work Package	Staff/Volunteer	Date
Category 1			
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.		2023
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	2024
	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	December 2025
	Photos and/or scans of all prints/drawings at Study Centre	DW and Volunteer	500 in 2026/2027

	Photographs and measurements/condition details added to Modes records of all material in Room 7 (Strongroom) at Study Centre.		In progress End of 2025
	Photographs and measurements/condition details added to Modes records of all material in Room 6 (metalwork) at Study Centre.		2026/2027
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.	Seek funding	2027/2028
	Bring in an expert to review/survey all unidentified African collection items (approx. 200 items). Give a significance assessment.		2027/2028
	Bring in an expert to review/survey all unidentified Japanese/Chinese 'oriental' collection items (approx. 200 items). Give a significance assessment.		2028/2029

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		2024
Insurance valuations	Insurance valuation by Sotheby's of European sculpture and Duke's for 20 th century pINRINFA		2024
	Revise Insurance Strategy	sn	2023
	Insurance valuation of furniture.		2026

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		2025
	Input Loan Register No. 2 years 1968-1976		2026
	Input Loan Register No. 3 years 1999-2004		2027

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 of 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
- (17) Equity and Inclusion Plan
- (18) Audit Policy
- (19) Damage and Loss Policy