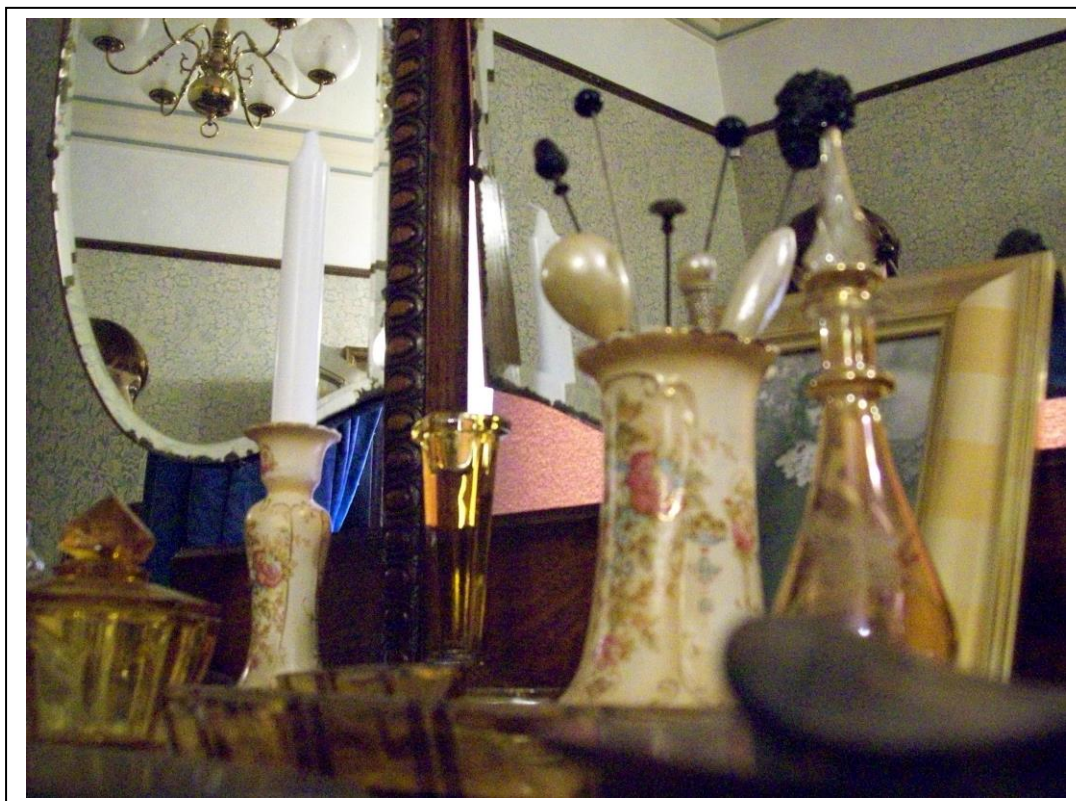


Documentation Policy Statement and Plan Sandwell Museum and Arts Service 2018-2028



Reviewed April 2018 and October 2021

Resources: Sandwell Museums looks after 6 buildings across the borough including 4 historic houses, a canal pumping station and a purpose built Victorian museum and art gallery. The service also looks after around 20,000 objects, a proportion of which are accessioned.

The Museum Services Manager is head of collections as well as education and learning and the front of house area of the service.

There is also one full time Collections Officer who works across the service. It is their role to implement and monitor the policies and procedures with the help of other museum staff across the service. The collections officer is also the premise manager for one of our museum sites and has some front of house duties.

1. Plan Introduction

1. This plan has been updated and re-issued in April 2018 as due to long-term sickness Sandwell Museum Service has been without a collections officer for two years. Therefore work on this plan has not taken place so the plan has been reviewed and re-issued.

1.1 Sandwell Museum's policy statement regarding the documentation and review of its collection is set out in the collections management policy and the collections, rationalisation and review policy, these policy statements are repeated below.

1.2 Sandwell Museums recognises that 120 years of collections management coupled with different approaches and parts of the collection being owned by different authorities which became Sandwell in 1974 has led to a situation where we now have a difficult to administrate and disparate set of documentation for our collection.

1.3 A change of personnel responsible for the collection has highlighted documentation issues stretching back decades that have perhaps not been fully tackled in the past. Sandwell Museums now has a clear commitment to ensuring a comprehensive review of the collection and its documentation, ensuring the objects are well documented to at least minimum standards, the accession register is organised and tidy, labels are correctly administered which will lead to a better understanding of our collection and all objects are either accessioned or placed on an inventory. (appendix 1)

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1.4 Sandwell Museums is committed to reviewing its collection and its collection documentation within the resources available to ensure added knowledge and high-quality care.

We acknowledge that if current levels of resourcing and staffing are maintained this is a long-term commitment. If resources and staffing are reduced policies and plans will need to be reviewed again. This document will be reviewed again in 2024

We have reviewed the documentation plan which was originally dated 2014-2024 as from 2016 there was no Collections Officer working on the collection due to long-term sickness. This issue has now been resolved and a new Collections Officer has been appointed so this document has been reviewed to ensure the process moves forward.

Sandwell Museums recognises the current climate of dwindling resources and although is committed to reviewing and improving documentation of the collection in order to ensure it is a resource for the community, it recognises that the priority is the service's contribution to the council's key priorities. However it also recognises that its ability to do this affectively is increased by having a well-documented and organised collection.

1.5 The documentation plan below gives a detailed plan for fulfilling these policy statements and ensuring that standards are maintained and continually improved up.

1.6 Museum and Collection Management policies and procedures are in place to support the implementation of this plan.

1.7 Sandwell Museums will have industry standard spectrum compliant procedures to measure the following areas:

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

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1.8 Sandwell Museums will employ at least minimum standards for SPECTRUM in its documentation procedures.

2. Documentation Policy Statement

See Section 5.3 of the Collections Management Policy Collections Care and Documentation

5.3 Sandwell Museums is committed to; documenting its collections, meeting at least minimum industry standards and guidelines, recording sufficient information about each accessioned object in its care so that it can be identified and located and that information is backed up and stored appropriately.

Objects which are not accessioned will be documented appropriately in inventories and necessary paperwork for acquiring these objects and history information kept. These objects will not be subject to the stringent rules associated with accessioned objects and accreditation.

3. Collection's Review and Rationalisation Policy

See section 2.9 of the Collections Review and Rationalisation Policy

The rationalisation process will be part of a larger collections review, which will ensure the efficient and effective management of the collection and create an effective and active collection which maximise its full potential as historical records and vibrant community resources. Collections review, rationalisation and documentation will take place hand in hand as resources and capacity allows.

4 Documentation Plan

4.1 Aims and Objectives

The aim of this plan is to give a comprehensive work plan to current and future staff stretching over the next decade in order to fully review Sandwell Museum Service's collection and review, update and consolidate the documentation around the items we hold.

The objectives are to:

1. Document to industry standards new acquisitions as they are taken into the collection whilst simultaneously undertaking a review and consolidation of the collection itself and documentation.

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2. Break down different areas of the collection into manageable areas to tackle.
3. Within each section complete the review from start to finish before moving onto the next section.
4. Ensure that documentation is reviewed and completed at each stage.
5. Ensure that documentation is stored appropriately - electronically and as paper copies to enable future generations to have a comprehensive knowledge of the objects life as a museum artefact.
6. Any loans identified within the section of the collection under review will be reviewed.
7. Ensure that industry standards are maintained at all times

5. Tasks to undertake for each documentation review section.

At each stage of the review a process will be followed and completed before moving onto the next section of the collection.

1. All existing paperwork or other historic documentation will be brought together (cards, old inventories, history files and other information)
2. Each item within the area identified will be examined in turn (staff should work in twos to ensure that agreement is made if there is uncertainty in marrying paperwork to object)
3. paperwork and object and all numbers associated with that object will be identified and married together
4. a photograph of each item will be taken, clearly identifying it with its museum accession number
5. An electronic copy of bringing together all information, photograph previous numbers etc will be produced for collection items.
6. An updated inventory will be produced for all items.
7. A review will take place to see if there are any items which may need disposal or any items which are not fully accessioned which should be.
8. Not all objects will be accessioned – Sandwell Museums will ensure that key objects and collections are accessioned and other objects are entered onto an inventory and cared for appropriately to their need and use. Sandwell Museums management team will decide on items to be accessioned and items to be placed on the collections inventory.
9. The accession register should be checked/ reviewed and updated to ensure the object information is there and correct.
10. All object labels should be reviewed.
11. CALM should be updated or fresh entries made where entries have not yet been added.
12. The target of adding an average of 50 objects to CALM each month will be maintained this is 6,000 objects over the life of this document (this will mean that all accessioned and inventory items will be on CALM in 20 years' time). These items will also be fully documented in the appropriate records, history files started where there are none already, labelled and marked etc.
13. An inventory will be kept of non-accessioned items that are to be appropriately cared for but are subject to collection care and management policies where appropriate but not accreditation standards.

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6. 10 year plan documentation plan and progress as at October 2021 during review.

| date | area | Building | Comments/ Risks to not achieving | Mitigations |
|--------------------------------------|--|------------------|--|--|
| June 2013- June 2014 | The Oak House Museum | Oak House | Began as part of the Making Space project The Collections Review and Rationisation Policy came out of this project | |
| 2014-15 | Oak House Museum | Oak House | Collection documentation rationalised and brought together, objects photographed and electronically stored accessioning reviewed. Inventory updated | |
| 2016-2018 | Collections officer long term sick therefore collections documentation activities suspended and only essential collections care and management maintained. April 2018 – New collections officer appointed | | | |
| April 2018- December 2018 | Collections officer organising and planning how this plan is to be executed and put into action and worked around site diaries, staffing and ready to record information | | | |
| January 2019 – January 2020 | The Oak Room, Morning Room, Library and Housekeeper's parlour | Haden Hill House | Risks 1. staffing levels drop further | this plan should be reviewed bi-annually to ensure on track. Dates and |

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| | | | | |
|----------------------------|--|--------------------------------|---|---|
| | Also review loans to the museum service | Paperwork at Wednesbury museum | 2. funding and resources levels drop | <p>details yearly planning and review should be undertaken in January each year to timetable in the following year's work before other priorities take precedence</p> <p>Annual detailed planning for following year and allocation of roles and days set aside in museum diary.</p> <p>The documentation plan update should be an item on the museums monthly management team to ensure progress and that it remains current.</p> <p>Disaster is mitigated by a full set of health and safety policies, procedures and checks, disaster plans and conforming to council procedures</p> |
| January 2020- January 2021 | The bedroom, Drawing Room, Nursery and Servant's bedroom - | Haden Hill House | 3. other priorities deemed more important | |
| January 2021- January 2022 | The attic store | Haden Hill House | 4. staff pulled away for other duties. | |
| January 2022- January 2023 | The Ruskin Gallery and local history gallery | Wednesbury Museum | 5. Staffing personnel changes | |
| January 2023- January 2024 | The Paint Store, Richard's Gallery and landing | Wednesbury Museum | 6. museum service dismantled and closed | |
| January 2024- January 2025 | Cellar – natural history room (end of corridor) | Wednesbury museum | 7. disaster occurring | |
| January 2025- January 2026 | Cellar – textiles room, and ethnography (Caddick collection) | Wednesbury Museum | | |
| January 2026- January 2027 | Ceramics, birds and butterflies room – and archaeology store | Wednesbury Museum | | |
| January 2027- January 2028 | Weights room, corridor storage including weapons etc | Wednesbury Museum | | |

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|-------------------------------|---|--|--|--|
| | | | | |
| January 2028 December 2028 | The Manor House chapel, Bishop Asbury Cottage | The Manor House, Bishop Asbury Cottage | | |
| January 2029 | documentation | all | Other council key priorities, staffing levels. | That between June 2018 and June 2028 6,000 items will have been entered onto the CALM system which will include all accessioned objects. |

Appendix 1 – A toe in the water

In 2013 after realising that we needed to completely review the collection and documentation, Sandwell Museums took part in the 'Making Space' project. This project recognised that museum stores are full and that museums need to rationalise their collections (see Sandwell Museums Review and Rationalisation Policy).

Above and beyond this aim, Sandwell Museums recognised that we needed to review the documentation of the collection too and we decided to use this project to pilot a collections and documentation review while there was expert support.

We chose to use The Oak House Museum as our pilot project and would review the collection and documentation at this site which would then inform us how we could roll out the project over the next 10 years across our other museum sites.

We chose Oak House as it has a smaller number of collection objects held within it and it is very clear what are collection objects and which are inventory items.

As part of the project we:

1. gathered together all the existing information on the objects we had
2. worked in pairs and examined each object in turn, married the paperwork with the object and any previous numbers it had been given in its life as a museum object.
3. establish and review which objects belong to us and what were on short or long-term loan.
4. we took photographs of each object
5. we put all this information together in an electronic format that can be easily updated and stored
6. we updated CALM
7. we updated the accessions register to reflect our findings.

This was an extremely useful exercise as we were able to bring together all elements into clear, concise and precise documentation. We learned a lot about our objects by giving ourselves time to examine them and were able to decide if there was anything we felt should not be in the collection.

This project was an extremely useful exercise and has helped inform us of the timescale and mechanics and methods which we can employ in the collections review and documentation review for our other sites. We will use this experience as a model for our other sites.