

ARCHIVES & COLLECTIONS DOCUMENTATION POLICY

POLICY DETAILS:

Date of approval	December 2021
Approving body	Board of Governors
Supersedes	Documentation Policy, June 2019
Date of EIA	November 2021
Date of next review	December 2024
Author	Susannah Waters, Archives and Collections Manager
Responsible Executive Group Area	Research and Innovation
Related policies and documents	Collections Care and Conservation Policy
Benchmarking	Museum Association Accreditation Scheme

The Glasgow School of Art (GSA) recognises that it has a duty of care for the fine art, design, architectural and archive collections held in its possession.

Well-managed documentation procedures are an essential element of a successful, professionally run museum and archive and are indicative of how an institution views its broader responsibilities.

Therefore, GSA is committed to making sure that it is able to:

- account for each item's acceptance into the collection and to provide written/ signed evidence for all acquisitions
- record, document and label each object to the minimum standards set out in [SPECTRUM](#), the UK's documentation standard or the equivalent for archival collections
- disseminate appropriate levels of documentation (via searchable databases or other methods) as a means of extending public access to item/collection information
- ensure online resources meet [The Public Sector Bodies \(Websites and Mobile Applications\) Accessibility Regulations](#)
- capture and clearly convey relevant and accurate information to all stakeholders in accessible language, offering information in alternative formats as required
- provide contextual information and explanation in relation to records which contain language or imagery of a sensitive nature which may cause offence
- locate each item at any given time and be in a position to track the temporary movement of any item within the museum and archive
- produce and retain relevant documentation supporting the loan of all items into and out of the museum and archive for the purposes of exhibition display, conservation needs etc.
- provide written evidence that items, permanently exiting the collection, meet acceptable standards, as outlined in SPECTRUM, particularly with regards to deaccessioning, where the [Museum Association's Code of Ethics](#) should also be consulted.

A review of documentation processes and progress is undertaken on an annual basis and informs forward planning. Documentation programming is undertaken in consideration of collection needs, user demands and equality impact.

Preservation

The GSA also recognises that it has a duty of care to guarantee the physical security and long-term preservation of all documentation records for its museum and archive collections. It will therefore ensure that:

- where appropriate, original cataloguing systems (such as file cards) are retained as historical evidence of how the collection developed
- current paper documentation (accessions paperwork, loan and exit forms) are archived in a secure environment but that these can be readily accessed, as and when required
- a surrogate copy of accessions paperwork is maintained and kept in a separate location ¹
- consideration is given to the over reliance of collections documentation held on electronic systems where there is a risk that technology/software programmes become obsolete and the data is subsequently inaccessible ²

1. New accession paperwork is scanned and a digital surrogate is kept and backed up on a server. Older accessions are recorded in two registers, each kept in a different building

2. A disaster recovery plan is in place for collections databases and a digital asset register is maintained to review risk of born-digital archive materials