

UNIVERSITY ART COLLECTION – DOCUMENTATION POLICY

Name of governing body: Council of the University of Reading, Collections Governance Committee

Date on which this policy was approved by governing body: 27 January 2023

Policy review procedure: The Documentation Policy is reviewed at least once every five years. The date when the policy is next due for review is noted below.

Date at which this policy is due for review: 31 January 2028

Introduction

The University Art Collection is committed to caring for its collections by recording, maintaining, and enhancing all associated information. This is a central tenet for the University Art Collection to be accountable for the collections, their accessibility, management, research, study, and use.

Documentation is also the key to making the most of the collections by the greatest diversity of users, both by preserving the information that makes items interesting and useful, and by enabling staff to manage the collections effectively.

Aims and Objectives

The aim of this Documentation Policy is to ensure that the University Art Collection fulfils its responsibilities in relation to security, management, and access of collections by:

- Providing ongoing access to the collections and collections information
- Improving all catalogue records and the accountability for the collections
- Ensuring the continued security of information we hold about the collections
- Maintaining at least the minimum professional standards in documentation for all objects, and continue to improve the standard of documentation to a high level for as many objects as possible

The policy applies both to items which are a permanent part of the Collection and to loaned items, which we are responsible for on a temporary basis.

Documentation Standards

The University Art Collection is committed to record significant information about the objects in our care so that all object we are legally responsible for, including loans, can be identified and located.

All objects are documented according to the guidelines in SPECTRUM 5.1 – the UK Standard for Collections Management. The minimum professional standard as defined by SPECTRUM, includes the following nine primary procedures:

- Object Entry
- Acquisition and Accessioning
- Location and Movement Control
- Inventory
- Cataloguing
- Object Exit
- Loan In (Borrowing Objects)
- Loan Out (Lending Objects)
- Documentation Planning

Full details of how information is recorded under each of these primary procedures is outlined in the **Documentation Procedural Manual**. However, it is important to note in this policy that due to the nature of the collection, objects will always be catalogued to individual item level. This ensures that for each object, at a minimum, there is:

- proof of legal title through standardised Object Entry Forms
- an accurate record in the Accessions Register
- a unique object number
- a record on the computerised collections management system
- an up-to-date location recorded

The University Art Collection also has a successful track-record of enhancing the quality of documentation from these minimum requirements to a high standard, specifics of which detailed in the **Documentation Procedural Manual** and **UMASCS Loans Policy**. This process of improving collections information will be continued on an individual basis, as and when new information becomes available, and in working through the remainder of the collection in a systematic way as specified in the **Documentation Plan**.

To ensure that documentation standards are kept consistent throughout staff turnover, the **Documentation Procedural Manual** will be regularly maintained. The manual will cover the practical implementation of this policy and will provide relevant training to all staff to which the procedures are relevant.

Access

The University Art Collection will provide ongoing and improved access to the collections and their accompanying information for staff, researchers, and members of the public. These will be accessible through a range of routes, including direct access by staff to our collections management system (currently Adlib), public enquiries, physical visits to the Collection via the Art Collection Study Room and material displayed around the University campuses, and on various websites. The most notable of these websites are:

- the University Art Collection's website, which includes details about specific areas of the Collection and a series of pages on artists represented in the Collection under an A-Z list
- Enterprise, the University of Reading's main online collections database
- ArtUK, the online home for art in every UK public collection

The long-term availability of physical documentation such as object records and accession registers will be safeguarded using archival storage materials and the digitisation of records where appropriate.

Any retrospective documentation and catalogue enhancement carried out, as detailed in the **Documentation Plan** and **Documentation Procedural Manual**, will continue to improve this access. For further information related to the access of the Collection and its associated documentation see the **Access Policy**.

Security

The University Art Collection has procedures to ensure the physical security and long-term preservation of all documentation records, whether physical or digital. In addition appropriate steps are taken to safeguard the security of the information itself. This includes:

- a regularly reviewed disaster management plan for the protection of paper accession files
- regular back-ups of digital assets to a secure external server
- storing information with both the physical and digital object records, where relevant
- secure handling of personal donor information, ensuring such information is not publicly accessible via any of the University's public databases

By continuing to upgrade and improve ICT systems, the University Art Collection is determined that digital records and assets will not be put at risk by obsolescent technology. New technology will be investigated and trialled where appropriate.

This is particularly important when it comes to the collections management system (currently Adlib) which is the authoritative repository for up-to-date core information about the collection and loaned items, with each significant collections management interaction with an object recorded.

Related Policies, Legislation and Guidance

This policy is supported by several other internal policies and procedures, in addition to meeting the requirements of several external guidelines and legislation. These documents (listed below) enable the University Art Collection to consistently record its collections and review requests for confidential data in compliance with the applicable legislation and any legal agreements or conditions of gift.

Internal Documents

- UAC Documentation Plan
- UAC Documentation Procedural Manual
- UAC Access Policy
- UAC Collections Development Policy
- UAC Forward Plan
- UMASCS Loans Policy
- UMASCS Digital Preservation Policy

External Documents

- Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation
- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- Museums Association Code of Ethics
- Copyright and Designs Patent Act, 1988 and subsequent amendments
- Code of Practice on Archives for Museums and Galleries in the United Kingdom (third edition, 2002).
- PAS 197:2009 Code of Practice for Cultural Collections Management
- SPECTRUM 5.1, the UK Collections Management Standard
- Environmental Information Regulations 2004