Documentation planning pack, part 2 -
Greendale Museum Documentation Plan, 2018

This example documentation plan has been written for a fictional museum and should be read alongside *Documentation planning pack part 1*.

Contents

1. Introduction

1.1 Context and background for Greendale Museum's Documentation Plan

Greendale Museum's mission is 'to increase public awareness, appreciation and understanding of Greendale's natural, historic and cultural heritage through the acquisition, preservation and display of objects that are relevant to Greendale'.

Greendale's long-term collections consist of social history, archaeology, geology, industrial history, agriculture, social history, a library and archives. Greendale Museum operates a busy enquiry and identification service.

Greendale Museum's Collections Development Policy and Documentation Policy describe Greendale Museum's commitment to:

- The continued development and review of the museum's collections, and collections information.
- Working within national collections management standards, specifically the UK Museum Accreditation Standard and Spectrum.
- The development of several key areas in the collection specifically with reference to the social history collections.
- Working with local communities to continue to enhance knowledge about the collections.

This Documentation Plan has been prepared by the Collections Manager, Susan Smith in consultation with all staff, including the team working on the museum's Accreditation submission. This plan will be submitted as part of Greendale Museum's Accreditation return, due to be submitted in January 2019.

1.2 Greendale Museum's target position

The aim of this documentation plan is to:

- Improve Greendale Museum's documentation system so that it meets the minimum standard for the Spectrum primary procedures.
- Resolve the documentation backlog for Greendale Museum's electronics collection so that it meets the Spectrum Inventory standard.

2. Greendale Museum's documentation system

2.1 The Spectrum minimum standards

Greendale Museum implements the Spectrum primary procedures, with the exception of *Loans in* and *Loans out*. The Spectrum primary procedures form the basis of an accountable documentation system. It is also a requirement of the Accreditation Scheme that an Accredited museum implements the minimum standard for the primary procedures in its documentation system. The Spectrum primary procedures are:

- *Object entry.*

- *Acquisition and accessioning.*

- *Location and movement control.*

- *Inventory.*

- *Cataloguing.*

- *Object exit.*

- *Loans in* – Greendale does not currently borrow or lend objects (see Collections Development Policy).

- *Loans out* – Greendale does not currently borrow or lend objects (see Collections Development Policy).

- *Documentation planning*.

Greendale Museum also uses the Spectrum procedure for *Deaccession and disposal*.

2.2 Analysis of the current shortfalls in the primary procedures, and actions for improvement

The documentation procedural manual describes how each primary procedure is implemented at the museum. These have been reviewed against Spectrum 5.0 to identify shortfalls and actions to bring each procedure up to the minimum standard.

Object entry

Requirement	Met?	Notes
You can account for all objects left in your care.		Staff and volunteers are not aware of the policy regarding objects left at the museum, or the details of our Collections Development Policy, and there is no communication about policy with the public. If an object is taken to the Collections Manager's office, we do not record its movement or new location.
You have clear terms and conditions for accepting objects into your care.		There is no consistency on the use of entry forms and receipts are often not given.
You record why objects have been left with you.		As above.
You schedule the default return of objects to the owner if they are not to be acquired or loaned.	✔	
You record who legally owns objects left with you.	✔	Whilst not done consistently on entry forms, owner details are always recorded.
You assess and mitigate any potential risks to people or other objects from incoming objects.	✔	

You record as much significant information about newly-arrived objects as you can, to be added to in the future.		As above.
Both you and owners know your liability for loss or damage while objects are in your care.		As above.
You provide a receipt for owners and get a signature to show they accept your terms and conditions.		As above.
You can uniquely identify newly-arrived objects.		We do not attach the entry number to deposited objects, and although all objects are kept in the cupboard at the museum desk, sometimes objects go astray.

Actions required:

1. Consult, prepare and agree amendments to Greendale's' Collections Management policies concerning the entry of objects to the museum. The policy statements need to agree:

- The circumstances and terms under which objects are accepted at the museum desk.

- The terms under which they are cared for and returned to their owners.

- The roles within the museum who are responsible for accepting objects into the care of the museum, and into the long-term collections.

2. Implement the use of Collections Trust Object entry forms for every object deposited at the museum.

3. Amend the *Object entry* procedure in Greendale's procedural manual to reflect changes.

4. Train all staff and volunteers, including front of house, in the *Object entry* policy, procedure and in the use of the Object entry forms.

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Acquisition and accessioning

Requirement	Met?	Notes
You only acquire objects in line with your agreed policy and applicable laws, treaties and codes of practice.	✔	
You have written evidence that the undisputed owners of acquired objects have transferred title to your museum.	✔	This is currently done using Transfer of title forms. The museum will be introducing Collections Trust Object entry forms and will use the 'additional agreement' going forward.
You make donors aware of the terms by which their gift or bequest is accepted by you.	✔	As above.
You give a unique number to each accessioned object and securely label or mark it with this number.	✔	
You keep all relevant information about the acquisition of objects, accessible via their unique numbers.		Correspondence related to acquisition is not kept in a consistent format or in searchable system.
You have a tamperproof record of all accessioned objects, using their unique numbers.		Accession records are loose leaf, rather than bound into a tamperproof register.
As backup you have an up-to-date security copy of all accession records.		There are no security copies of Accession registers.

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Actions required:

5. Introduce bound accession registers. For existing accession records this will be produced by binding existing loose-leaf pages. For the records held on computer the museum will purchase archival quality printer paper and reprint the records for binding, following Collections Trust guidance. For new acquisitions, the museum will purchase an archival quality accession register from the Collections Trust, which will be filled in by hand using permanent ink.

6. Store the accession register in a secure fire-proof safe.

7. Introduce history files to hold information about the acquisition process. These will be used to store all correspondence relating to the acquisition of an object, extracts from relevant wills, original invoices and correspondence relating to grant aid. History files will be filed in accession number order.

8. Create security photocopies of existing accession registers and instigate a system for backing up new registrars every six months. Store security copies off site.

9. Amend the procedure in Greendale's procedural manual to reflect changes.

Location and movement control

Requirement	Met?	Notes
You have a system of recording all locations where objects are displayed or stored within your museum.	✔	
You have the records needed to monitor whether agreed environmental standards are being met.	✔	
You record every movement of an object, including the date moved, and change the location record in line with your policy.	Partially	See *Object entry.*

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You can access location information by object number and location name.	✔	
You record who has moved objects (and who authorised those moves if required).	✔	
You have as full a history of objects' previous locations as practical.	✔	
You assess any risks of moving objects (both to the objects themselves and to people) and, where needed, have a written plan to mitigate them.	✔	
You have appropriate insurance or indemnity cover in place before transporting objects, particularly in the case of borrowed objects.	✔	

Inventory

Requirement	Met?	Notes
You have met the minimum requirements for all other primary procedures.		See other primary procedures and action plan.
From the various records in your system you could, if required, produce a complete list of every object (or group of objects) in your care.		The majority of the collection is recorded to Inventory level, with the exception of the electronics collection - see Section 3 for details.

Every object (or group of objects) has a unique number securely associated with it, linking your records to the physical items they describe.		
If a unique number refers to a group of objects, or one object with several parts, you record the number of individual items.		
Every object (or group of objects) has a recorded name and brief description (or image).		
You know the current location of every object (or group of objects) and when it was noted there.		
You know who owns each object (or group of objects) in your care, and how they came to be in your care (eg acquired, on loan).		
If you have more than one type of collection (eg accessioned objects and a handling collection) you know which collection an object belongs to.		
If you do not currently meet the above requirements, you have an appropriate plan to do so within an agreed time period.	✔	

Actions required:

See Section 3.2 for a detailed breakdown of Inventory priorities and actions.

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Cataloguing

Requirement	Met?	Notes
You have a catalogue system in place that allows you to record the minimum information needed for the *Inventory* procedure and, beyond that, supports your cataloguing policy.	✔	The museum uses a combination of hard copy catalogue cards, and a CMS. A longer-term aim of the museum is to have all objects recorded on the CMS.
Catalogue records are linked to the objects they describe via unique accession numbers that are securely associated with the items themselves.	✔	
Catalogue records cross-refer to relevant information held in your system (whether on paper or digitally) or available elsewhere.	✔	
Your system can reliably retrieve relevant catalogue information to meet the needs of users.	✔	
You capture relevant information resulting from other procedures in a timely way.	✔	
You keep an up-to-date backup of your catalogue records.	✔	

Object exit

Requirement	Met?	Notes
You can account for all objects that have left your museum for whatever reason.	✔	
All objects leave with appropriate authorisation.	✔	
You get appropriate signatures to prove that you have transferred objects into someone else's care.	✔	
You keep up-to-date location and movement records for objects that belong to you even when they are away from the museum.	✔	

Loans in and Loans out

As stated in the Collections Development Policy, the museum does not currently borrow or lend objects. If this policy changes, procedures will be developed in line with Spectrum 5.0.

Documentation planning

Requirement	Met?	Notes
Review the collections information you already have and agree areas for improvement in the light of your collection management priorities.	✔	
You have a written documentation plan setting out specific objectives that can be achieved within a realistic timeframe given the available resources.	✔	
You review progress towards achieving your plan's objectives regularly.	✔	

3. Improving collections information at Greendale Museum

3.1 A review of Greendale Museum's collections information and improvements needed.

Greendale's long-term accessioned collections consist of social history, archaeology, geology, industrial history, agriculture, social history, a library and archives. Greendale Museum holds approximately 20,000 objects across these collections, of which approximately 5,000 objects belong to the social history collections, a large proportion of which is related to the electronics industry dating to the 1950s/60s/70s. The museum holds large collections of electronic equipment with associated photographs, sound recordings and memorabilia, some of which probably have no connection with the town.

Until the early 1990s no objects in the social history collection had been accessioned. In 1991-1992 some accessioning was carried out and 2,000 objects were accessioned and catalogued to inventory level in Modes. These objects were given locations, and since then location records have been maintained. The electronics collection, approximately 3,000 objects, has not been documented or accessioned and will be the focus of the action plan. A summary of the collections recorded to Inventory level can be seen overleaf.

Since 2006 all new additions to the long-term collections have been accessioned and catalogued to inventory level, and regular audits are carried out to ensure standards are being maintained.

Collection	Approx. number of objects (or groups of objects in bulk)	Recorded to Inventory level or above	Backlog	Notes
Social history	5,000	2,000	3,000	Electronics collection: Not numbered, accessioned or recorded in Modes. No locations recorded. Stored in Room 6 (approx. 1,000) and 7 (approx. 2,000).
Archaeology	3,000	3,000	0	
Geology	2,500	2,500	0	
Industrial history	4,000	4,000	0	
Agriculture	4,000	4,000	0	
Library and archive	1,500	1,500	0	
Total	20,000	1,700	3,000	

3.2 Prioritisation

Museum Accreditation places the documentation plan in the context of the museum's development policy and the museum's documentation.

Greendale's Collections Development Policy identifies our electronics collection as a key area for development. As described above, these collections are largely undocumented and cannot be used. This collection receives a high number of enquiries and the museum is aware that a large number of people in the town worked at the electronics factory, have a strong interest in the collection and have much to contribute to the museum's knowledge. The electronics collection is stored in Rooms 6 and 7, and so is suitable for a systematic *Inventory* project. In February 2018, a small trial was carried out to estimate timescales for the actions below. The documentation action plan (section 4) includes milestones to monitor progress, which will enable these to be adjusted if necessary.

Actions required:

10. List the objects in Rooms 6 and 7, giving temporary numbers where there is no number marked or labelled on the object. Based on a 2017 spot check audit, we anticipate that this will be the case for the majority of objects. Listing will be done by creating basic records in Modes for each object/group of objects. Records will only consist of core *Inventory* information:

    o   Number or Temporary number.

    o   Object name.

    o   Object description.

    o   Number of objects.

    o   Location.

    o   Recorder name and Date.

11. Reconcile objects with existing documentation (in registers, on entry forms, history folders, meeting minutes, and by consulting with staff and volunteers), recording these checks as set out in the procedural manual:

    o   To identify those objects given temporary numbers.

    o   To identify information related to acquisition, where it exists, and adding this to Modes records.

12. Review the collection with the help of specialist volunteers to identify which objects should be retained in the long-term collection and objects to be recommended for disposal.

13. Compiling written recommendations for disposals, based on action 12, to be authorised as set out in procedural manual.

14. Accession retained objects with current year's accession number, including marking and labelling and updating Modes records.

15. Follow disposal procedure for objects identified and authorised during action 12 and 13 (advertising on MA website etc.)

16. Update Modes records for objects disposed of.

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4. Action plan for Greendale Museum

See Appendix 1 for a summary timetable for actions 1-10.

Aim: to improve Greendale Museum's documentation system so that it meets the standard for the Spectrum primary procedures						
	Action	**Approx. timescale**	**Resources**	**Action by**	**Progress**	**Notes**
Object entry						
1	Consult, prepare and agree amendments to Greendale's' Collections Management policies concerning the entry of objects to the museum.	Jul-Aug 2018	Staff time	Collections Manager	Complete	
2	Implement the use of Collections Trust Object entry forms.	By end Sep 2018	Cost of entry forms	Collections Manager		Ordered 100 entry forms from Collections Trust 12 Aug 2018.
3	Amend the *Object entry* procedure in Greendale's procedural manual.	By end Sep 2018	Staff time	Collections Manager		

4	Train staff and volunteers in new *Object entry* procedure.	Oct 2019	Staff and volunteer time Cost of training Cost of refreshments.	Collections Manager Front of House Manager Volunteer Coordinator		
Acquisition and accessioning						
5	Bring accession registers up to the Spectrum standard (binding old registers, printing computerised records, buying new register).	By end Jan 2019	Cost of accession registers, archival paper, binding Staff time	Collections Manager Documentation Officer		
Deep clean of museum		Nov-Dec 2019	See Care and Conservation plan			
6	Store the accession register in a secure fire-proof safe.	By end Feb 2019	Cost of fire-proof cabinet	Collections Manager Site Manager		
7	Introduce history files.	By end Feb 2019	Staff time	Documentation Officer		

8	Create security photocopies of existing accession registers.	By end Feb 2019	Cost of photocopying and staff time	Collections Manager		
9	Amend the *Acquisition and accessioning* procedure in Greendale's procedural manual.	Mar 2019	Staff time	Collections Manager		

Aim: Inventory of the electronics collections in Rooms 6 and 7							
		Action	**Approx. timescale**	**Resources**	**Action by**	**Progress**	**Notes**
10		List the objects in Rooms 6 and 7, using temporary numbers where necessary and creating basic records in Modes:	See 10.1 and 10.2.	Tie on labels for temporary numbers Cost of refreshments	Collections Manager (Volunteer Team)		Approx. 200 objects a day.
	10.1	Room 6 (approx. 1,000 objects).	By end May 2019	Two volunteers working one day a week			
Exhibition changeover			**Jun-Jul 2019**				
	10.2	Room 7 (approx. 2,000 objects).	By end Oct 2019	Two volunteers working one day a week			
Review documentation plan timescales			October 2019.	Staff time.	Collections Manager.		
11		Reconcile objects with existing documentation.	Nov 2019-end Mar 2020	Collections Manager working two days a week and two volunteers working one day a week Cost of refreshments	Collections Manager (Volunteer Team)		Approx. 150 a week.

12	Review the electronics collection using a collections review matrix.	By end May 2020	Staff and volunteer time. Cost of refreshments	Collections Manager (Volunteer Team)		
13	Compile written recommendations for disposals based on action 12.	By end Jun 2020	Staff time	Collections Manager		
Trustee meeting		Aug 2020				
14	Accession retained objects.	By end Aug 2020	Staff and volunteer time Cost of refreshments Marking and labelling kit	Collections Manager (Volunteer Team)		
15	Follow and implement *Disposal* procedure.	Sep 2020-Feb 2021.	Staff time	Collections Manager		
16	Update Modes records for objects disposed of.	By end Mar 2021	Staff and volunteer time Cost of refreshments	Collections Manager (Volunteer Team)		

Aim: maintain Spectrum 5.0 primary procedures						
	Action	**Approx. timescale**	**Resources**	**Action by**	**Progress**	**Notes**
17	Review procedural manual.	Dec 2019	Staff time	Collections Manager		Recurring action, annually.
18	Spot check audit to ensure standards are being maintained – see procedural manual for *Audit* procedure.	Nov 2021.	Cost of refreshments Staff and volunteer time.	Collections Manager (Volunteer Team)		To become a recurring action, annually.

5. Risk analysis

Risk factor	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation
The completion relies heavily on the input of volunteers. We require their time and expertise. The project will be at risk if we cannot maintain the momentum of the volunteer team.	Medium	High	• Invite volunteers to training. • Provide refreshments for volunteers ensure comfortable working conditions, involve volunteer team in planning. • Hold events at half way point and at end of project. • Ensure that volunteer expertise and knowledge is acknowledged and seen to be affecting the outcome of the project.
We cannot deliver the project within the resources available.	Medium	High	• Keep the project activity defined - do not over deliver on quality to the detriment of the entire project.
Lack of communication and awareness internally.	Medium	High	• Documentation Plan will be added to agenda for Collections team meetings. • Documentation Plan will be added to the agenda for each quarterly Trustee meeting, and a progress report circulated in advance.

6. Date and sign off

Date: 01.07.2018   Signature: S. Smith
Date ratified by governing body: 30 July 2018
Review date: 01 July 2019

Appendix: Summary timetable

Documentation plan
Other activities

Action	Jul 2018	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan 2019	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan 2020	Feb	Mar	Apr
1	■	■																				
2			■																			
3			■																			
4				■																		
5				■	■		■															
Deep clean of museum					■	■																
6								■														
7								■														
8								■														
9									■													
10										■	■			■	■	■						
Exhibition changeover												■	■									
Review timeframes.																■						

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Collections Trust's mission is to help museums capture and share the information that gives their objects meaning. Our standards and advice are used around the world to make museum collections accessible.

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