



maa
museum of archaeology
and anthropology

University of Cambridge

**Museum of Archaeology and
Anthropology**

Collections Development Policy

2019
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I. Museum's statement of purpose

Statement of Purpose

The primary purpose of the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology is to care for, interpret, and enhance access to the outstanding collections of material culture, works of art, photographs and documents.

We aim to:

- Make the collections accessible to audiences locally, regionally, nationally and internationally
- Exhibit the collections at MAA and elsewhere, through collaboration with other museums
- Lead innovative and ambitious research programmes related to the collections, and the intellectual, social and environmental issues that they raise
- Provide and support teaching, across all levels, using the collections
- Present engaging public programmes and increase participation in our diverse cultural offer
- Work toward the decolonization of the Museum, through transparency regarding collections' histories and through support for greater inclusion and representation
- Maintain a respectful and engaging environment for our staff, volunteers and audiences

2. An overview of current collections

The Museum's collections consist of archaeological and anthropological material from all parts of the world and from all periods of human history. The material in the Museum is organised into a number of key areas:

Archaeology: the Museum holds archaeological finds from every part of the inhabited world. They range from some of the very oldest – early hominid tools discovered by Louis Leakey in Olduvai Gorge – to modern Australian spear points knapped from glass. The collections include finds from major excavations crucial to the development of archaeology, such as those conducted by Kathleen Kenyon at Jericho in the Jordan valley, one of the oldest continually occupied cities in the world, and material from Star Carr in Yorkshire, excavated by Grahame Clark over 1949-51. MAA holds one of the finest pre-Columbian collections in Britain, including remarkably preserved early textiles; important prehistoric Arctic materials; wide-ranging collections relating to early research in southern Africa and Egypt; collections from Bronze Age Hungary; and – of special interest to local communities – the region's most comprehensive collection of artefacts from Cambridgeshire and surrounds, spanning all phases of occupation from the Palaeolithic to the Post-Medieval periods. This collection continues to expand, primarily through the acquisition of objects via the Treasure Act (1996).

Anthropology: MAA cares for artefacts from Asia, Africa, Oceania and the Americas, as well as material related to British and European folklore. Among the Museum's best known collections are those deriving from the voyages of Captain Cook to the Pacific in the 1770s. The Museum's founding curator, Anatole von Hügel spent several years in Fiji and assembled the single most important collection of nineteenth-century Fijian material outside Fiji itself, and went on to be highly energetic, soliciting collections and donations from fieldworkers and travellers in many parts of the world. Major field collections include those made by Alfred

Haddon during the 1898 Cambridge expedition to the Torres Strait, by Northcote W. Thomas from Nigeria and Sierra Leone, by Charles Hose from Sarawak, by Gregory Bateson from the Sepik River, Papua New Guinea, and by Christoph von Furer-Haimendorf in Nagaland.

Photography: MAA holds over 220,000 individual photographic objects, one of the largest and most significant collections of anthropological and archaeological collections of photographs in Britain. MAA has always held a collection of photographs, many related to artefacts in the collection, viewing them as important sources of information, but has only recently taken steps to regard them as a core collection. Our earliest photographs were taken in 1860 by Louis Allen Goss, a school inspector working in Rangoon, Burma. The collection includes material from the late 19th and early 20th century – when there were significant developments in the way photography was used – as well as recent works by contemporary anthropologists and artists. Many photographs are on regular display; the reserve collection can be seen by appointment.

Modern and Contemporary Art: Since the 1990s MAA has acquired works of modern and contemporary art, especially works that are related to our historic collections, or that are otherwise relevant to the Museum. Since a surprising number of the historic objects that we hold were in fact distinctive, innovative creations, the much-debated distinctions between ‘traditional craft’, ‘material culture’, and ‘art’ have become less useful or meaningful. With the support of the Art Fund, among other bodies, the Museum is building a wide-ranging collection of sculpture, prints, paintings and digital and installation works that foreground indigenous perspectives from various parts of the world, and include works by British and other artists that respond to both anthropological and archaeological collections, and to western traditions of collecting and museum-making.

In addition to the long-term accessioned collections described above, the Museum maintains a number of other collections. Acquisition and disposal of material in relation to these collections is not necessarily managed according to procedures set out in relation to the core collections.

Archival Material: MAA’s accumulated archives are a rich resource that relates to the Museum’s collections, as well as to the history of the Museum itself and its role in the development of the disciplines of archaeology and anthropology. Among the archives are excavation notebooks and site plans from sites such as Jericho and Pat Carter’s excavations in Lesotho, the Fijian journals of Baron Anatole von Hügel, and the correspondence of museum staff and collectors.

Library: MAA maintains a small reference collection of books related to our collections. This largely comprises publications such as exhibition catalogues sent to the Museum when items from the collection are published in them. The Museum also works closely with the Haddon library, the neighbouring library of the Departments of Archaeology and Social Anthropology.

Handling Collections: MAA maintains a separate handling collection, which is used by education groups at the Museum and elsewhere, and provides loan boxes for use by schools and education groups.

3. Themes and priorities for future collecting

The Museum’s policy is to collect anthropological material of research and aesthetic value, including not only artefacts but also photographic and other related records. The Museum

also actively collects works of contemporary art that are relevant to the collections and the intellectual challenges they raise. These include, but are not limited to, works from communities represented in the Museum's historic collections.

The Museum aims to develop collections that are historically representative. Where existing holdings incorporate significant collections from the late nineteenth and early to mid-twentieth centuries, artefacts representative of continuity, change and contemporary creativity from the later twentieth and twenty-first centuries should be selectively added to the collections. Acquisitions should be accompanied by the fullest possible contextual information. Collections made by Cambridge research students, or by others supported by grants from the Crowther-Beynon Fund, which are precisely provenanced and appropriately documented will enhance the Museum's value as a resource for research and teaching.

In responding to prospective donors of ethnographic collections, curators should draw attention where appropriate to museums and cultural centres in the countries or regions of origin. Where historic collections available in those countries and regions are limited or unrepresentative, consideration should be given to offering such institutions, or others within the relevant wider region, 'first refusal' of prospective donations. Curators may provide advice and/or facilitate such donations, particularly where they have expertise and/or professional contacts in the countries concerned.

Where purchases of historic artefacts are considered, curators should confirm that museums in the countries of origin and/or within relevant regions are not seeking to acquire the works.

In archaeology, MAA's historic collections from Cambridge and the surrounding region are the strongest in the region and will continue to be supplemented by strategic acquisitions that complement our existing collections and enable us to provide a home for material of special significance. In practice this means that most acquisitions will involve material brought to our attention under the Treasure Act, through the Portable Antiquities Scheme, or by local archaeological units.

Legal and ethical considerations preclude the acquisition of most new archaeological material from outside the United Kingdom, though collections may still appropriately be acquired if special agreements are in place with relevant national and other authorities. Historic collections may also be appropriately acquired from time to time, including of photograph collections relating to archaeological work.

The potential research and curatorial value, especially of larger donations, needs to be balanced against the cost of accessions processes and future care. Extensive collections that lack precise provenance information, or that for other reasons are of limited curatorial or academic value should not normally be accessioned.

MAA recognises its responsibility, in acquiring additions to its collections, to ensure that care of collections, documentation arrangements and use of collections meets the requirements of relevant accreditation standards.

4. Themes and priorities for rationalisation and disposal

MAA has a long-term purpose and possesses permanent collections in relation to its stated objectives. The Museum Committee accepts the principle that, except for sound curatorial reasons, there is a strong presumption against the disposal of any items in the Museum's collection. Disposals would however be considered where the following criteria apply:

- Research reveals that items do not fall within the categories described in this policy.

- Items have been damaged or have deteriorated beyond the Museum's ability to repair them.
- Items are discovered to pose a threat to health and safety.
- Items have been identified as spoliated during the Nazi, Holocaust and World War II period.
- Items have been subject to a request for repatriation or restitution.

Where disposal is being considered this will be carried out in accordance with the disposal procedures, outlined below in clauses 13(a) to 13(s). MAA will also be guided by the Museums Association 'Disposal Toolkit', 2014.¹

5. Limitations on collecting

MAA recognises its responsibility, in acquiring additions to its collections, to ensure that care of collections, documentation arrangements and use of collections will meet the requirements of the Accreditation Standard. It will take into account limitations on collecting imposed by such factors as staffing, storage and care of collection arrangements.

6. Collecting policies of other museums

MAA will take account of the collecting policies of other museums and other organisations collecting in the same or related areas or subject fields. It will consult with these organisations where conflicts of interest may arise or to define areas of specialisms, in order to avoid unnecessary duplication and waste of resources.

Specific reference is made to the following organisations:

- Relevant national museums such as the British Museum, the V&A and the Tate
- Other University of Cambridge Museums, such as the Fitzwilliam Museum
- The Pitt Rivers Museum
- The Horniman Museum
- The Royal Anthropological Institute
- Museum of Cambridge

7. Policy review procedure

The Collections Development Policy will be published and reviewed from time to time, at least once every five years. The date when the policy is next due for review is noted above. Arts Council England will be notified of any changes to the Collections Development Policy, and the implications of any such changes for the future of existing collections

8. Acquisitions not covered by the policy

Acquisitions outside the current stated policy will only be made in very exceptional circumstances, and then only after proper consideration by the Museum Committee, having regard to the interests of other museums.

9. Acquisition procedures

a. MAA will exercise due diligence and make every effort not to acquire, whether by purchase, gift, bequest or exchange, any object or specimen unless the responsible curator

¹ Available at: <https://www.museumsassociation.org/download?id=1075416>

is satisfied that the museum can acquire a valid title to the item in question.

b. In particular, MAA will not acquire any object or specimen unless it is satisfied that the object or specimen has not been acquired in, or exported from, its country of origin (or any intermediate country in which it may have been legally owned) in violation of that country's laws. (For the purposes of this paragraph 'country of origin' includes the United Kingdom).

c. In accordance with the provisions of the UNESCO 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, which the UK ratified with effect from November 2002, and the Dealing in Cultural Objects (Offences) Act 2003, MAA will reject any items that have been illicitly traded. The curators and the governing body will be guided by the national guidance on the responsible acquisition of cultural property issued by the the Collections Trust²

d. MAA will not acquire unmodified biological and geological material. It will also not acquire modified artefactual biological and geological material by any direct or indirect means if material has been collected, sold or otherwise transferred in contravention of any national or international wildlife protection or natural history conservation law or treaty of the United Kingdom or any other country, except with the express consent of an appropriate outside authority.

e. MAA will not acquire archaeological antiquities in any case where the responsible curator has any suspicion that the circumstances of their recovery involved a failure to follow the appropriate legal procedures. In England, Wales and Northern Ireland the procedures include reporting finds to the landowner or occupier of the land and to the proper authorities in the case of possible treasure as defined by the Treasure Act 1996. In Scotland similar finds should be reported through the Treasure Trove procedure. We are aware that the Treasure Act is currently under review and will update this document accordingly.

f. Any exceptions to the above clauses 9a, 9b, 9c, or 9e will only be because the museum is:

- acting as an externally approved repository of last resort for material of local (UK) origin
- acquiring an item of minor importance that lacks secure ownership history but in the best judgement of experts in the field concerned has not been illicitly traded
- acting with the permission of authorities with the requisite jurisdiction in the country of origin
- in possession of reliable documentary evidence that the item was exported from its country of origin before 1970

In these cases MAA will be open and transparent in the way it makes decisions and will act only with the express consent of an appropriate outside authority.

g. As MAA holds or intends to acquire human remains under 100 years old, it will obtain the necessary licence under the Human Tissue Act 2004.

10. Spoliation

MAA will use the statement of principles 'Spoliation of Works of Art during the Nazi,

² Available at: <https://collectionstrust.org.uk/cultural-property-advice/acquiring-cultural-property/>

Holocaust and World War II period, issued for non-national museums', issued for non-national museums in 1999 by the Museums and Galleries Commission.³

11. The Repatriation and Restitution of objects and human remains

The Museum Committee of the Faculty of Human, Social and Political Sciences approves the loan of artefacts for analysis and exhibition, short- and long-term; and may approve the de-accessioning of artefacts owned by the University of Cambridge, cared for by the Museum, to enable them to be returned to communities or nations of origin.

The Museum's collections, which range widely over archaeological periods and inhabited regions of the world, are notably diverse. Therefore, claims made for the return of material are considered on a case-by-case basis.

Collections have reached the Museum in many different ways. Some artefacts, in common with those in similar museums, were acquired in a manner that was not considered legitimate or appropriate at the time, or would not be considered legitimate or appropriate today. The Museum is supportive of research into the histories of the collections, and will engage with claimants and potential claimants in an open and respectful way.

Potential claimants should note that some artefacts cared for at MAA are not legally owned by the University. In these cases, it may be necessary for claimants to submit requests to other organisations; MAA staff will provide guidance and where necessary contact details.

Scope

This policy does not deal with claims relating to human remains. The University's guidance regarding claims for the transfer of stewardship of human remains can be found [at www.admin.cam.ac.uk/secretariat/remains](http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/secretariat/remains)

Eligibility

For artefacts and specimens closely associated with communities of living descendants, claims should be made by recognized organisations, representing the descendants of the customary owners of the artefacts in question. Such claims may be submitted by individuals, by institutions such as museums, or by national governments, with evidence of formal support from the relevant representative community organisations. If the status of claimants is disputed, the museum's governing body will defer formal consideration of a claim until such issues are resolved.

Claims should be supported by government authorities, or explicitly state why such support is inapplicable in the particular case.

For natural specimens, archaeological artefacts or antiquities not closely associated with communities of living descendants, claims may be made by relevant national governments, explicitly explaining why community support is inapplicable in the particular case.

³ Available at: <https://collectionstrust.org.uk/resource/spoliation-of-works-of-art-during-the-nazi-holocaust-and-world-war-ii-period-issued-for-non-national-museums/>

Claims made by third parties will not be considered.

Criteria

In keeping with a 'case by case' approach, claims may be based on histories of acquisition, the secret and/or sacred nature of particular artefacts, educational and public benefit, or other grounds.

Claimants should outline the significance of the artefacts concerned, for example, in cultural, historical or spiritual terms.

The Museum Committee will consider whether artefacts were illegitimately acquired:

- if they were, or may have been, acquired illegally, or exported from the nation of origin illegally
- if they were, or may have been, appropriated in the aftermath of violence
- if they were, or may have been, acquired under circumstances whereby owners were compelled to sell them, or from people who were demonstrably not legitimate owners

It should be acknowledged that existing documentation and scholarship may not establish object histories authoritatively or definitively. Further research may be required to clarify the nature and context of transactions, or their probable nature and context. Such research should draw fully on relevant expert advice, including advice from local or indigenous communities when relevant, and be undertaken in a consultative manner by curators and members of originating communities.

The Committee will also consider the academic, cultural and public benefits of returning artefacts to a community or nation of origin, taking into account considerations that may include:

- whether the continuing sacred and/or secret significance of artefacts makes exhibition and/or continuing research access inappropriate or unethical
- whether specific artefacts may be of exceptional importance to communities and nations, such that their presence is vital to belief, culture and wellbeing
- whether specific artefacts are part of a historically significant collection, associated for example with a particular expedition or encounter, that should itself be considered an important historic formation and scholarly resource, which may be diminished through dispersal
- what educational, research and public value the artefacts have in their MAA setting

In this context, claimants' proposals concerning the future location, conservation, exhibition and accessibility of artefacts will be fully considered.

Process

Prospective claimants are encouraged to liaise informally with the Director and curatorial staff of the Museum in advance of any formal claim. The Museum welcomes research visits from community members and prospective claimants which may clarify areas of common ground and help shape the most feasible and appropriate approaches to the future of particular artefacts and collections.

Formal claims should be submitted to the Chair of the Museum Committee, c/o Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Downing Street, Cambridge. Claims will be promptly acknowledged. The Chair of the Museum Committee will ask the Director and curators to provide a preliminary assessment of eligibility and an initial response to the claim. The Committee may establish a Sub-Committee including additional members with relevant expertise. The Committee will formally confirm claimants' eligibility, and may seek expert opinion on any aspect. The Committee may consider it necessary to commission further research, which should normally be undertaken within three to six months. The Committee should normally reach a decision regarding a claim within twelve months, and will in any case provide a response to claimants within that time frame, outlining what stage consideration has reached.

Should the University's decision be disputed by the claimant, an appeal may be submitted and will be reviewed by a panel of five individuals, who may be members of the University or external experts, nominated by the Registry.

The Committee should also consider whether, in the particular case, there are alternatives to retention and permanent return which should be considered. These might include the loan of artefacts for exhibition and study purposes, potentially on a medium or long-term basis; or, in the case of collections, the return of a proportion of material alongside retention of sufficient numbers of artefacts to maintain displays dealing with the culture or region in question. In all cases, collaboration with communities, museums and scholars in the nation of the collections' origin should be sought. Where MAA artefacts are associated with collections elsewhere, for example in other European museums, the Director and curators should liaise regarding the scope for a shared approach.

12. Management of archives

As MAA holds archives, including photographs and printed ephemera, the Museum's governing body will be guided by the Code of Practice on Archives for Museums and Galleries in the United Kingdom (3rd ed., 2002).⁴

13. Disposal procedures

Disposal preliminaries

- a. The Museum Committee will ensure that the disposal process is carried out openly and with transparency, unless there are strong reasons of cultural sensitivity why this should not be the case.
- b. By definition, the Museum has a long-term purpose and holds collections in trust for society in relation to its stated objectives. The governing body therefore accepts the principle that sound curatorial reasons for disposal must be established before consideration is given to the disposal of any items in the Museum's collection.

⁴ Available at: <http://www.archivesandmuseums.org.uk/scam/code.pdf>

c. MAA will confirm that it is legally free to dispose of an item and agreements on disposal made with donors will be taken into account.

d. When disposal of a museum object is being considered, the Museum will establish if it was acquired with the aid of an external funding organisation. In such cases, any conditions attached to the original grant will be followed. This may include repayment of the original grant and a proportion of the proceeds if the item is disposed of by sale.

Motivation for disposal and method of disposal

e. When disposal is motivated by curatorial reasons the procedures outlined in paragraphs 13g-13s will be followed and the method of disposal may be by gift, sale, exchange or destruction (in the case of an item too badly damaged or deteriorated to be of any use for the purposes of the collections or for reasons of health and safety).

f. The Museum will not undertake disposal motivated principally by financial reasons.

The disposal decision-making process

g. The decision to dispose of material from the collections will be taken by the Museum Committee only after full consideration of the reasons for disposal. Other factors including the public benefit, the implications for the Museum's collections and collections held by museums and other organisations collecting the same material or in related fields will be considered. External expert advice will be obtained and the views of stakeholders such as donors, researchers, local and source communities and others served by the Museum will also be sought.

Responsibility for disposal decision-making

h. A decision to dispose of a specimen or object, whether by gift, exchange, sale or destruction (in the case of an item too badly damaged or deteriorated to be of any use for the purposes of the collections or for reasons of health and safety), will be the responsibility of the Museum Committee acting on the advice of its professional curatorial staff, and not of the curator of the collection acting alone.

Use of proceeds of sale

i. Any monies received by the Museum's governing body from the disposal of items will be applied for the benefit of the collections. This normally means the purchase of further acquisitions. In exceptional cases, improvements relating to the care of collections in order to meet or exceed Accreditation requirements relating to the risk of damage to and deterioration of the collections may be justifiable. Any monies received in compensation for the damage, loss or destruction of items will be applied in the same way. Advice on those cases where the monies are intended to be used for the care of collections will be sought from the Arts Council England.

j. The proceeds of a sale will be ring-fenced so it can be demonstrated that they are spent in a manner compatible with the requirements of the Accreditation standard.

Disposal by gift or sale

k. Once a decision to dispose of material in the collection has been taken, priority will be given to retaining it within the public domain, unless it is to be destroyed. It will therefore be offered in the first instance, by gift or sale, directly to other Accredited Museums likely to be interested in its acquisition, or to museums of equivalent standing in the countries from which the material originates.

l. If the material is not acquired by any Accredited Museums to which it was offered directly as a gift or for sale, then the museum community at large will be advised of the

intention to dispose of the material, normally through an announcement in the Museums Association's Museums Journal, and in other specialist journals where appropriate.

m. The announcement will indicate the number and nature of specimens or objects involved, and the basis on which the material will be transferred to another institution. Preference will be given to expressions of interest from other Accredited Museums. A period of at least two months will be allowed for an interest in acquiring the material to be expressed. At the end of this period, if no expressions of interest have been received, the Museum may consider disposing of the material to other interested individuals and organisations, giving priority to organisations in the public domain.

Disposal by exchange

n. The nature of disposal by exchange means that MAA will not necessarily be in a position to exchange the material with another Accredited museum. The governing body will therefore ensure that issues relating to accountability and impartiality are carefully considered to avoid undue influence on its decision-making process.

o. In cases where the governing body wishes for sound curatorial reasons to exchange material directly with Accredited or unaccredited museums, with other organisations or with individuals, the procedures in paragraphs 13a-13d and 13g-13h will be followed as will the procedures in paragraphs 13p-13s.

p. If the exchange is proposed to be made with a specific Accredited museum, other Accredited museums which collect in similar or related areas will be directly notified of the proposal and their comments will be requested.

q. If the exchange is proposed with a non-accredited museum, with another type of organisation or with an individual, MAA will make an announcement in the Museums Journal and in other specialist journals, where appropriate.

r. Both the notification and announcement must provide information on the number and nature of the specimens or objects involved both in the Museum's collection and those intended to be acquired in exchange. A period of at least two months must be allowed for comments to be received. At the end of this period, the Museum Committee must consider the comments before a final decision on the exchange is made.

Documenting disposal

s. Full records will be kept of all decisions on disposals and the items involved and proper arrangements made for the preservation and/or transfer, as appropriate, of the documentation relating to the items concerned, including photographic records where practicable in accordance with Spectrum Procedure on deaccession and disposal.⁵

⁵ Available at: <https://collectiontrust.org.uk/spectrum/procedures/deaccessioning-and-disposal-spectrum-5-0/>

