



maa  
museum of archaeology  
and anthropology

# University of Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology

## Documentation Plan 2019 (Reviewed March 2022)

**Approval Date: March 2022**  
**Review Date: March 2025**



UK Research  
and Innovation



Supported using public funding by  
**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**



## **1. Introduction**

The Museum of Archaeology & Anthropology (MAA) is committed to managing the collections it cares for in accordance with the Museums Accreditation Scheme and the Museums Association's Code of Ethics (see MAA Documentation Policy). Good documentation is critical to all aspects of collections management and MAA maintains a Documentation Procedural Manual in order to ensure reliable records of the collections are created and updated for present and future staff and users.

MAA's current documentation procedures are Accreditation compliant and the majority of our records meet this standard. For some historic records, research and record keeping is needed to bring the documentation of this material up to the present standard, as far as is possible.

There is an undefined backlog of objects that have no paper or digital record (Documentation Backlog) and of registered objects with no digital records (Registration Backlog). The scale of the collections at MAA requires a long-term strategy to define and resolve these backlogs. A phased approach is outlined in this plan.

## **2. Documentation Procedures**

MAA's Documentation Procedural Manual defines the following processes, as they are carried out by the staff of the Museum:

- Object entry
- Acquisition
  - an accession register
  - security copy of accession register
  - assigning accession numbers
- Marking and labelling
- Cataloguing procedure
  - Minimum standard listed under Section 5
- Location and movement control
- Loans in
- Object exit
- Loans out
- Retrospective Documentation

## **3. Defining 'Backlog'**

MAA acknowledges two main forms of backlog within its collections:

*Documentation Backlog:* An unknown number of registered objects which have no digital record.

This can only be systematically addressed by cross-checking paper records against digital records.

*Registration Backlog:* An unknown number of un-numbered objects (archives, artefacts and photographs) which have no digital or paper record. This can only be systematically addressed by an inventory.

## **4. Addressing the Backlog**

Since 2014, MAA has undertaken a box-level inventory of every museum store; each box and location have been assigned a barcode and database record. The next stages in addressing the Documentation

and Registration Backlogs are laid out below. It should be noted that daily curatorial work, researcher projects, etc. will resolve some of these issues, but only a systematic approach will ultimately resolve the backlogs.

**Documentation Stage 1:** all documentation procedures in place and used.

**Documentation Stage 2:** carry out an object-level inventory of all museum collections, assigning TEMP numbers to unregistered objects

**Documentation Stage 2.1:** An object-level inventory of MAA's off-site store (i.e. 50% of the collection), will be carried out from 2020-2024.

**Documentation Stage 2.2:** Funding must be secured to undertake an object-level inventory for the remainder of the collections from 2025 onward.

**Documentation Stage 3:** Address Documentation Backlog by cross-checking paper records against digital records and creating new digital records.

**Documentation Stage 3.1:** Funding must be secured to undertake a systematic cross-check

**Documentation Stage 4:** Discrepancy checking: reconciling data from object-level inventory and record digitisation to check whether any TEMPed items have previously been accessioned.

**Documentation Stage 5:** Undertake SPECTRUM procedures for those items within the backlog selected for long-term retention within the primary collection.