



maa
museum of archaeology
and anthropology

University of Cambridge

Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology

Documentation Plan

2014 - 2019

Creation Date: February 2014
Review Date: May 2017



1. Introduction

The Museum of Archaeology & Anthropology (MAA) is committed to managing its collections 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 its collections are available for present and future staff and users.

Although MAA's current documentation procedures are Accreditation compliant, its historic records have not always met this standard and accordingly there is a backlog of research and record keeping needed to bring the documentation of all material up to the present standard as far as is now possible. This Plan analyses the scale of the backlog and sets out MAA's approach to resolving this issue.

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
- Information retrieval (Computer collections management system)
- Location and movement control
- Loans in
- Object exit
- Loans out
- Retrospective Documentation

3. Backlog Stages

Accreditation requires a museum to assess the following stages of its documentation backlog:

Documentation stage one: all documentation procedures in place and used.

Documentation stage two: an inventory of material identified as a potential backlog.

Documentation stage three: discrepancy checking, using the inventory, to check whether any items identified as part of the backlog have previously been accessioned.

Documentation stage four: undertaking SPECTRUM procedures for those items within the backlog selected for long-term retention within the primary collection.

4. Current Situation

MAA was justifiably proud of the new computer based collections management system that was introduced in the early 1990s. Data transfer to the new system and work on the backlog stages outlined in 3 above was believed to have been completed before 2010. However recent research on the collections has revealed that the original transfer of data was incomplete. It has also revealed

that although a fairly comprehensive audit has been carried out at the offsite store in the 2000s, location data is incomplete for material held at MAA's main site.

Database Review

A fresh assessment of the current situation in relation to location data held on the database has therefore been undertaken with the following results.

Location Records across all collections:

- 94% of database records have a store or gallery location
- 79% also have a box location
- 69% have a shelf location

For records for Objects recorded at the Offsite Store:

- 94% of material has a box location
- 92% has a shelf location

For records for Objects recorded at the Onsite Stores:

- 99% of material in the Photo Archive has a bay location.
- 78% of material in the Photo Archive has a box and shelf location
- 82% of material in the Keyser Store has a box location
- 79% of material in the Keyser Store has a shelf location
- 86% of material in the Bevan Store has a box location
- 41% of material in the Bevan Store has a shelf location*
- 91% of material in the Babington Store has a box location
- 7% of material in the Babington Store has a shelf location*

** Traditionally material in these stores has been organised geographically, with priority given to recording box locations.*

Material recorded as located within the galleries at MAA, records appear to be virtually complete, except that analysis of the records suggested that not all records were up to date.

NB These figures are based on records in the CMS database; obviously any material that does not have a CMS record because data has not been transferred into the database from paper records is not included in these figures.

Scale of the location backlog

14,479 records in the database have no recorded location (5.6% out of a total of 257,254 records), while a further 37,485 records (14.6%) have uncertain locations, although they have been nominally allocated to a particular store, sometimes on the basis that material of this type is generally found in that store.

5. Programme of work to resolve documentation backlog

Documentation stage one: ensuring all documentation procedures are in place and used, is complete.

Documentation stage two: a fresh review of the inventory, focussing on the galleries and the onsite Keyser and Bevan stores will begin in 2014, to be completed by January 2016. Material in the Babington Store and the offsite Shorts store will be addressed in the context of a likely stores move over the same period.

Documentation stage three: discrepancy checking, comparing the nominally complete catalogue with the updated inventory and historic accession registers, will be completed by January 2018.

Documentation stage four: undertaking SPECTRUM procedures for those items within the backlog selected for long-term retention, is nominally complete. Potential gaps revealed by the reviews described above will be dealt with as they are discovered. This work should therefore be completed by January 2019.

There are also backlogs of recent acquisitions in all collections (material that has not been catalogued within a year of its arrival). The work in these areas should be completed by January 2015.