

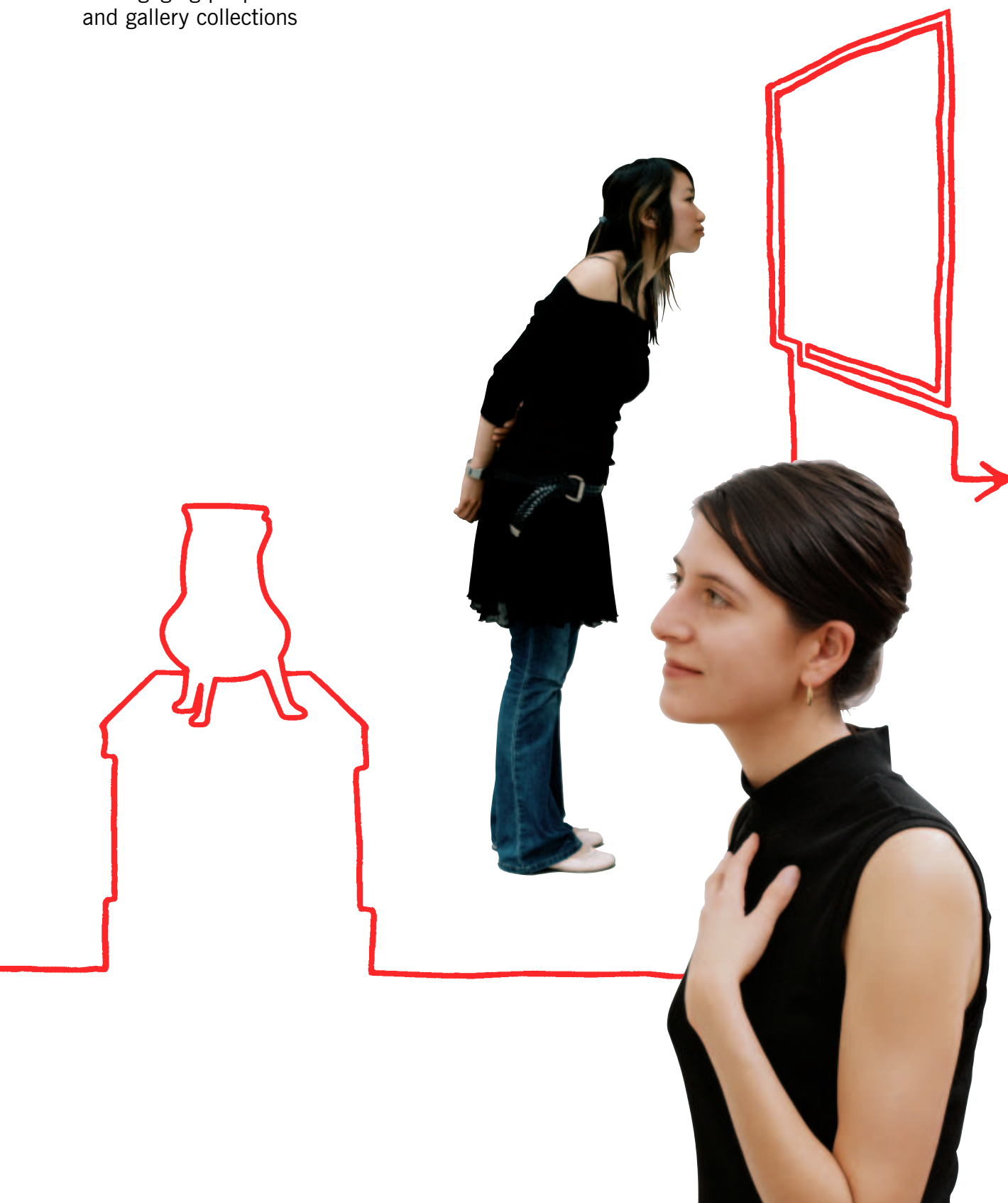
A national collections development strategy for Scotland's museums

SCOTTISH
MUSEUMS
COUNCIL



The way forward

for engaging people with museum
and gallery collections



Contents

SMC

The Scottish Museums Council (SMC) is the strategic agency and membership body for non-national museums in Scotland. Our vision is for *a welcoming museums and galleries sector that opens doors and celebrates collections, inspiring creativity, learning and enjoyment for all.*

Our membership includes all local authority, university and regimental museums and a large number of independent museums. Together, they manage over 340 sites and vary in size from small voluntary trusts to large metropolitan services. SMC is acknowledged by the Scottish Executive as its main adviser on local museums and galleries, and the main channel of support for the sector.

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(far left)
Picture by Irish artist Francis Tansey, as part of an exhibition at the Ironworks Gallery, Summerlee Heritage Park, Coatbridge.



(left)
Medieval brass tripod Ewer, found at Beuchan, Parish of Kier. Dumfries Museum, Dumfries.

Foreward

By John Leighton

Scotland's museums and galleries are at the heart of a vibrant cultural sector that continues to make a powerful contribution to Scotland and its people within communities across the country.

The Scottish Museums Council's National Collections Development Strategy has been designed to build on the strengths of the museum and gallery sector by marking out the way forward for engaging more people with Scotland's incredibly rich and diverse collections.

It places people and their enjoyment, inspiration and learning at its core, while acknowledging the importance of our collections to communities throughout Scotland and to shaping and promoting national and local identity.

The strategy encourages museums and galleries to work together and to work with other organisations forming partnerships that will support strategic long-term development of the sector.

It promotes skills development and knowledge growth, embraces creativity within the workforce and calls for innovative approaches to be adopted in terms of collections management, care and interpretation.

Making good use of this strategy and the Action Plan will ensure that Scotland's museums and galleries do not just meet public expectations but will surpass them.

John Leighton

Director-General of the
National Galleries of Scotland



'Buddy' the lion, Paisley Museum and Art Galleries, Renfrewshire Council.



Introduction

Scotland's collections are powerful representations of culture, identity and history which we are all entitled to engage with, learn from, contribute to and enjoy.

There are more than 12 million items in collections throughout Scotland. Incredibly diverse in scale, content, needs and significance, they do however share one quality: the potential to stimulate or inspire us as few other cultural resources can.

As their guardians, Scotland's museums hold a privileged position but also bear a great responsibility. Fundamentally committed to preserving collections as evidence of the past, they are equally duty-bound to develop them in the present if people are to continue to find them relevant. To achieve this, an increasingly creative approach to collections is required.

SMC's *A National Collections Development Strategy for Scotland's Museums* offers people managing and working in Scotland's museums a new framework through which to consider collections afresh.



Young visitor using the 'audio point', part of the new education facilities, Gordon Highlanders Museum, Aberdeen. Image courtesy of Newsline, Scotland

Collections in context

Issues in Scotland and the UK

Collections have never been so popular. The recent upsurge of enthusiasm for them and renewed appreciation of their many uses mean that today their potential is recognised in areas as diverse as third age learning and international relations.

Confirmation of the variety, importance and distributed nature of the nation's collections was established in 2002 with the first *National Audit of Scotland's Museums and Galleries*. This continues to provide a sound rationale for investment in the sector. Both the *Strategic Change Fund* and the *Regional Development Challenge Fund*, for example, produced dynamic initiatives which improved access to and management of collections.

The Museums Association's *Collections for the Future* consultation instigated a UK-wide debate and informed the 2005 report from which this strategy draws. In Scotland, more than fifty delegates contributed to the discussion through a collaborative SMC/Scottish Museums Federation meeting and ground was laid for the creation of *A National Collections Development Strategy* to address sector needs and aspirations.

SMC pursued a consultative approach throughout its production. A consultant worked with us to scope existing collections initiatives and draw up a questionnaire asking museums and stakeholders about relevant issues. This work informed discussion at open meetings held later in Aberdeen and Glasgow. Findings overall suggested that across the sector, 'a clear and positive majority favour change' and that the suggested priorities were endorsed.

Throughout the process, an Advisory Panel of UK museum professionals contributed knowledge and expertise whilst an SMC Working Group provided operational support. All contributors ensured that this, the last of four strategies designed to promote museum development, aligns with other key areas of work.

Launching *Scotland's Culture*, the Scottish Executive's report published in 2006, the Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport commended museums for the 'major contribution' they make to achieving cultural priorities. The report determines an even greater future role for collections in national life, presenting the sector with an exciting opportunity which it can lead on through the implementation of this strategy.

Challenges and opportunities

Where are we now?

Challenges

Balancing Priorities

Funders and governing bodies prioritise resources for learning and visitor provision without always acknowledging the associated requirements for essential 'behind the scenes' collections activity such as documentation, research and conservation.

Understanding Audiences

As access to museums widens, so too does the diversity of audiences; their needs, interests and preferred methods of gathering information. Museums need to establish what users want to know about collections and be able to evaluate how successfully this is communicated.

Changing Roles

Only a small percentage of Scotland's museum workforce has a collections-focused remit and those who do often perform additional operational duties. Correspondingly, specialist expertise is becoming rarer and not all collections are managed confidently.

Overcoming Obstacles

Limited resources, low staffing levels and corporate ambivalence toward collaborative working all obstruct collections development. To surmount these barriers, museums need to be willing to try new working practices.

Opportunities

Cultural Entitlements

The Scottish Executive has signalled its appreciation of collections and the central role it perceives for museums in providing opportunities for people to participate in cultural activity as a fundamental entitlement.

New Technologies

Museums are increasingly confident in the use of new technologies. This is resulting in innovative collections care and interpretative techniques and ever more effective management and promotion of collections information.

Current Trends

Genealogy, local history studies and ancestral tourism are growing in popularity. Museums, with diverse collections and expertise in communicating complex messages, are perfectly positioned to benefit from resulting investment to meet public demand.

Significance Scheme

Museums holding collections deemed of national or international significance in terms of their quality and importance will be eligible to apply for funding to support their use and care. This scheme has the potential to impact on the whole sector and encourage a national approach to collections development.

The way forward

Collections Development Goals and Priorities

This strategy has three goals:

- To promote Scotland’s diverse museum collections and their potential as community and cultural resources at local and national level.
- To support museum staff to develop and sustain collections confidently, openly and effectively.
- To encourage museums to provide increased and innovative opportunities for users to truly engage with collections.

Children taking part in a school educational activity on medals, Clydebank Museum, Clydebank.



In addressing these goals, the following priorities have been established:

Engaging People	Improving Knowledge	Shaping Collections
Supporting Stewardship	Working Together	

Key Priorities:

- **Engaging People** recognises the importance of understanding and involving a broad range of users in both public programmes and core collections activity.
- **Improving Knowledge** suggests that acquiring, growing, sharing and retaining information about collections is vital if they are to be used to their full potential.
- **Shaping Collections** explores the policies, practices and people needed to develop collections, ensuring they can evolve and remain relevant.

Underpinning Priorities:

- **Supporting Stewardship** encourages a planned approach in all areas of collections care and wider adherence to published standards in order to raise the profile of this work.
- **Working Together** promotes mainstreaming of collaborative activity: sharing collections knowledge, resources and experience through partnership.



Engaging people

Scotland's museums offer various means for people to access collections. The most dynamic and truly *engaging* however, are those which place users at the centre of their operations. This means that in addition to prioritising audience interests when planning events and outreach activities, opportunity exists for public input into the development of core collections policy and practice.

Connecting with Collections

Museums carry out visitor research and work to develop audiences in order to share collections more widely and more successfully. New and repeat visitors are encouraged *in* to galleries and stores by changing displays, touring exhibitions, 'behind the scenes' events and loans of key objects from elsewhere. Collections are increasingly taken *out* of museums too – borrowed for exhibition at other venues and featuring in handling packs for local interest or learning groups.

Such activity looks set to increase. *Scotland's Culture* recognises that it is often the immediacy of the 'real thing', the direct encounter with cultural resources, such as collections, which makes the user's experience so rewarding. It promotes access to and participation *with* these as an entitlement for all – prompting the sector to review current provision and to consider how it can enable more innovative action.

Effective Interpretation

Clear communications about collections is essential if visitors are to be enthused by them. Museums are becoming increasingly familiar with the need to consider the intellectual as well as physical access requirements of their users. The process of interpretive planning – understanding audience composition, conveying clear messages and evaluating success of the tools employed – is an established way to approach this.

Museums are also more aware today of people's different learning styles and use various methods to encourage a more participatory approach to interpretation. Some benefit from involving people

with a personal or working experience of particular collections in production of interpretive material or to act as guides. They perform a critical advocacy role by communicating their knowledge for a subject or site, and can add enormously to the visitor experience.

Creative Community Involvement

Museums which seek to involve local people *actively* with collections and collecting practice can be successful not just in representing community interests, but in generating a wide sense of ownership of the museum's functions and resources.

This approach is proven to be rewarding for participants and – when resulting in improved collections care, interpretation or documentation, a new exhibition, published research or contemporary collection – also creates a tangible, truly useful legacy.

The project-driven nature of much of this work means it is rarely referenced distinctly in collections policies or promoted as an organisational aim. Yet to develop and sustain community relationships requires dedicated resources and support. These are more likely to be secured when such creativity is mainstreamed and its impact measured in terms of real benefits, both to users and collections.

Promoting Collections Information

Scotland's collections enjoy a broad appeal and are of interest to people overseas as well as those living locally. Accordingly, the sector is turning to electronic means to communicate with a virtual audience, digitising collections and sharing associated information through websites.



Islanders exploring objects as part of the 'Collection Ceilidh', Comann Eachdraidh Lios Mor.

Museums are still discovering whether the scope of the collections information they offer on-line is in accordance with what users want, and further evaluation is required of how easily users are able to locate and access it. For example, whilst detailed object-level records are essential for those working in museums, a simple overview at collection-level might be more accessible, and more useful, to the general enquirer.

Comann Eachdraidh Lios Mor (CELM) – Collection Ceilidh

CELM's 2006 community documentation project started with a 'Collection Ceilidh' in the true Highland tradition of welcoming and visiting. It took place in the Village Hall, where islanders were invited to explore the collection over two days, bringing and sharing stories, memories and other associations inspired by what they saw. All the while, their information was being recorded by volunteers on pre-entry records.

The accuracy with which members of CELM can trace the provenance of their collection reveals a practice of 'bearing tradition' that has accompanied these objects through several generations of families.

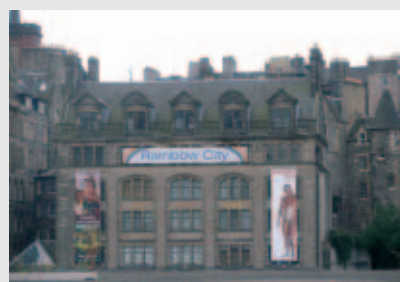
Gathering knowledge in this way has ensured that the island's oral heritage is fully integrated into the collection corpus – not considered a bolt-on or afterthought. It seems appropriate therefore, that this intangible heritage is considered a key element of the island's new Museum and Heritage Centre.

City of Edinburgh Museums – Remember When

In 2006, the Living Memory Association and City of Edinburgh Council collaborated on a two year, HLF-funded project, 'Remember When'. It aimed to document the social history of Edinburgh's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) communities from the 16th century to the present day.

Described as a 'powerful community effort', the project successfully engaged volunteers in a variety of ways. Individuals participated throughout the process by conducting oral history interviews, collecting artefacts and memorabilia and assisting with design of a landmark exhibition held at the City Art Centre. 'Rainbow City' encapsulated the past and present experiences of Edinburgh's LGBT communities in their own words and stories, and included an interactive element to enable visitors to continue to contribute through memory lending and story telling.

All of the material collected has been integrated with the City of Edinburgh's permanent museum collections. Images of the exhibition and extracts from the transcripts can be seen on the website www.rememberwhen.org.uk



City Art Centre, Edinburgh.



Improving knowledge

Knowledge in museums takes many forms. Object-specific information is recorded through the documentation process. Collection and subject expertise is developed through study, whilst practical skill and technical know-how is gathered through experience of collections. How museums manage and communicate this knowledge – and, crucially, the *value* they place upon it – is key to successful collections use.

Capturing Knowledge:

Documentation Procedures and Priorities

The limited usage of some collections in Scotland is the result of incomplete or inaccessible supporting documentation.

Growing adherence to published standards however means that more museums are training staff and volunteers and developing procedures to ensure that this issue is addressed. Since publication of *A National ICT Strategy for Scotland's Museums*, the sector has also progressed its use of electronic collections management systems, aware that information needs not only to be recorded systematically but maintained in a format likely to be accessible in the future.

With the focus on making more collections available for display, study or use, some museums need to review how they approach retrospective documentation and prioritise distinct projects which have a clear and demonstrable public benefit.

Increasing Knowledge:

Researching Collections and Updating Information

To manage collections effectively and provide opportunities for new audiences to relate to or be inspired by them, museums need to assess the knowledge they hold about collections regularly and invest in ways to enrich or augment it.

This includes examining the methods used to collect, maintain and link contextual information with object records. Working with volunteers, learning groups, private collectors and enthusiasts on dedicated 'knowledge-gathering' projects is a

good way to generate public enthusiasm whilst also developing collections information.

Creation of a research strategy can assist the co-ordination of collections study with broader, organisational aims. A phased approach to research can ensure collections-based activities and outputs are well-informed and resourced, interpretation is effective and access to priority collections is increased.

Glasgow Museums – Championing Research

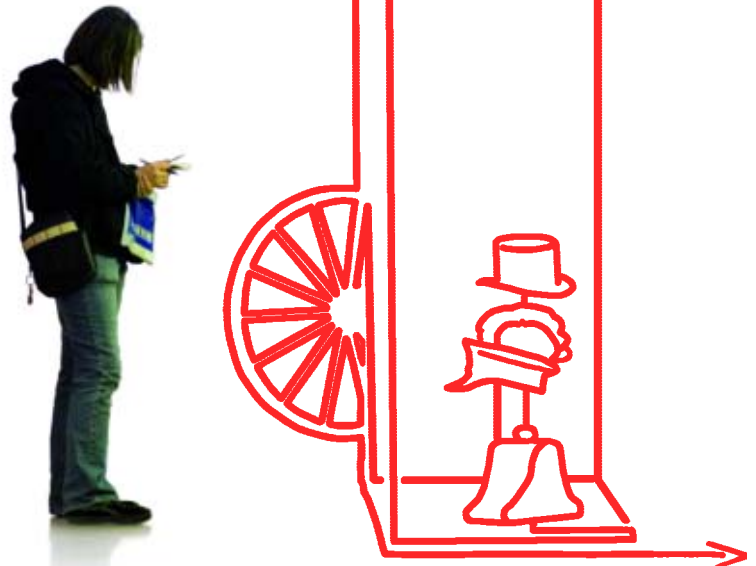
Believing that sound, authoritative knowledge ought to underpin all aspects of museum work, in 2002 Glasgow Museums established a research department and produced an organisational research policy.

Recognising that the object's story, or associated information offered by the donor, was often not collected or valued to the same degree as the object itself, the research policy naturally addresses the gaps in collection documentation. In order to fully 'unlock the secrets' of these objects today, it advocates that time and energy should be spent on researching them.

Glasgow Museums strives ultimately to relax control of collections knowledge by involving its stakeholders more meaningfully in the research process; collecting a variety of supporting information or personal testimonies to support use of objects and to preserve the knowledge of its diverse communities for posterity.



Visitor studying a display of hats, Aberdeen Art Gallery, Aberdeen.



Sharing Knowledge:

Engaging Specialists and Enhancing Skills

As fewer subject specialists work in museums, contributions from people of different backgrounds with expertise or experience of working with certain types of collection is increasingly important.

By successfully developing relationships with other museums, higher education bodies and retired industry professionals, for example, museums can acquire the skills or information needed to revitalise otherwise unusable collections.

The sector needs to do more to formalise these relationships and explore means for *all* museums to access such expertise. New knowledge, once acquired, ought to be published and disseminated more regularly for the widest benefit.

Safeguarding Knowledge:

Succession Planning and Project Legacies

It is essential that museums agree and consistently employ procedures to retain collections information and subject knowledge held by staff and volunteers intending to move on or retire.

Similarly, mechanisms to secure the knowledge created through research for publications, exhibitions or events – and the information accrued through short-term outreach or audience development projects – need to be devised and planned for at the outset. Valuable resources can otherwise be forgotten or become difficult to access.

Dundee's Strategic Change Fund Project – Playing to our Strengths

Amongst the aims of this project, partners Dundee City Council and Dundee Heritage Trust agreed the importance of working together to improve intellectual access to their heritage resources.

An intensive documentation enhancement programme began to augment both staff knowledge and visitor interpretation of collections. During this process, a few collections were identified as under-researched, under-used or lacking support in-house. Subject specialists including academics, working and retired curators were then approached to contribute expert collection assessments.

The programme successfully raised awareness of the cultural value of some of these collections. Staff confidence in managing them also improved as suitable areas for research, exhibition and contemporary collecting were highlighted.

Shaping collections

Constructive collections management recognises both active collecting and disposal as necessary development functions. Each requires assured decision-making based upon sound knowledge of collections, supported by robust policies and access to appropriate resources.

Publicising Policies

To create a confident national climate for collections development, information about significant holdings and collecting aspirations needs to be more widely shared and more easily accessed. The sector will then be better placed to progress its aim for a more co-ordinated approach to collecting and rationalisation.

Within individual museums, an agreed collecting and disposal policy is a key working document which can be used to focus the organisation's forward plans, prioritise resources and publicly communicate a core function. To be effective, it needs to be adopted by all, from members of the governing body to front of house staff.

Focused Collecting

As more collections information is shared, strengths and weaknesses of the nation's holdings become more apparent. Increasingly, this will allow priorities and opportunities for more active collecting and strategic collaboration to be readily identified, geographically or by subject. For example, a museum forum or subject specific network might produce a joint collecting policy, so encouraging complementary collecting practice and focused use of resources.

Most museums in Scotland are dependant on donations to augment their collections, which makes it crucial that potential donors understand both the limitations and potential for development expressed in a collecting policy. A growing number are being made available electronically, an approach which invites public understanding, ensures transparency and demystifies the collecting process.



Visitors up on the 'headframe' on Doors Open Day, at the Scottish Mining Museum, Newtongrange.

Painted ceramics by
Jessie M King, Stewartry
Museum, Kirkcudbright.



Addressing Collecting 'Gaps'

Further research needs to take place to establish what is not being collected by Scottish museums, and how existing barriers can be addressed. Potential priorities for consideration are materials which are physically challenging to collect or preserve, 'intangible' histories, digitally based and contemporary items.

The Scottish Arts Council's *National Collecting Scheme for Scotland* provided impetus for strategic collecting of modern artworks but such sustained, funded activity is unusual.

Contemporary collecting tends to happen on an ad hoc or project-driven basis and rarely benefits from explicit mention in collecting policies. Meanwhile, recording of the nation's oral tradition has been focused within the independent sector and collecting of new technologies has been led by local authority and national museums. These experiences need to be shared more widely and critical dialogue begun about future, increasingly co-ordinated collecting in Scotland. This will contribute both to the development of diverse collections and to the skills and confidence of museum personnel to initiate such work.

South Lanarkshire Museums Forum – Collecting Policy Agreement

South Lanarkshire is home to a number of independent museums, a local authority museum service and a national museum site, so overlaps in collecting areas inevitably arose. A verbal collecting agreement was created but changes in staff, volunteers and trustees eventually led to some confusion. By 2001, all agreed that a more formal arrangement was required so that individual policies would complement, not compete, with each other.

Members of the Museums Forum held a meeting to discuss and make decisions about the parameters of their collecting policies. Once approved by all governing bodies involved, these were summarised and collated into a single document and a map was produced to indicate agreed geographical boundaries.

In arriving at this agreement, participants appreciated being able to discuss their collecting concerns in open and constructive debate. Other issues tackled included the ethics of acquisition, Treasure Trove applications and protocol in dealing with objects of shared interest.

Shaping collections (cont.)

Active Acquisition

Many museums have a modest acquisition budget or no dedicated funds at all. It is therefore vital that all purchasing options are considered, and the sector is open about its experiences and examples of good practice.

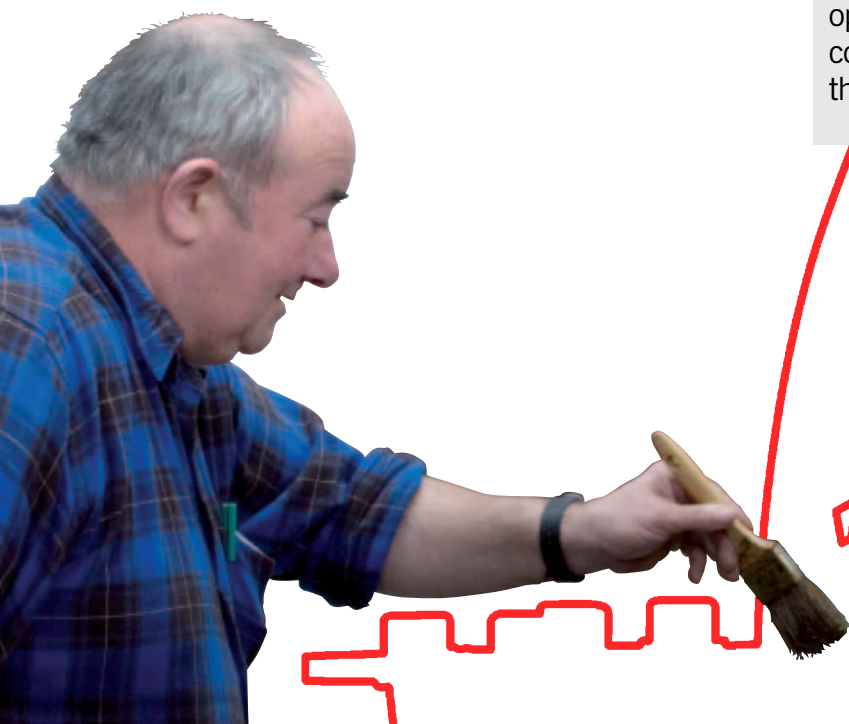
Further evaluation is required of the opportunities and challenges associated with joint purchase, and the funding bodies which assist with acquisition need to foster better awareness. The perception exists that there is a lack of confidence and experience in museums to undertake acquisition through private or commercial sales. This also needs to be addressed if greater activity is to be encouraged.

Aberdeen Maritime Museum – Contemporary Collecting Panel

The gradual replacement of fishing by oil-related businesses has meant many changes for the maritime trades and docks area of Aberdeen.

To collect, document and keep up to date with this transition from traditional to modern industry, Aberdeen Maritime Museum instigated a long term and innovative consultation process. An Oil Panel was established, made up of various industry representatives to establish what processes, equipment, information and images ought to be collected and preserved in the museum's collections.

The museum also benefits from participants' technical expertise and knowledge, and sometimes direct donations, whilst the individual companies involved can explore opportunities to contribute to the local community and preserve elements of their corporate identity.



Museum volunteer,
John Herd, operating the
Faceplate Lathe, Scottish
Maritime Museum, Irvine.



Tackling Disposal

The sector has established that there is simply neither the space nor the resources to continue to collect and to maintain existing holdings. The positive outcomes associated with acquisition are more familiar than those associated with disposal, but handled appropriately and as part of planned collections development programme, they can exist here too.

Dedicated attention and funding will revitalise some under-used collections but there are others which never will be useful, which are a constant drain on staff time and resources and are not accessible, nor therefore of interest, to museum users.

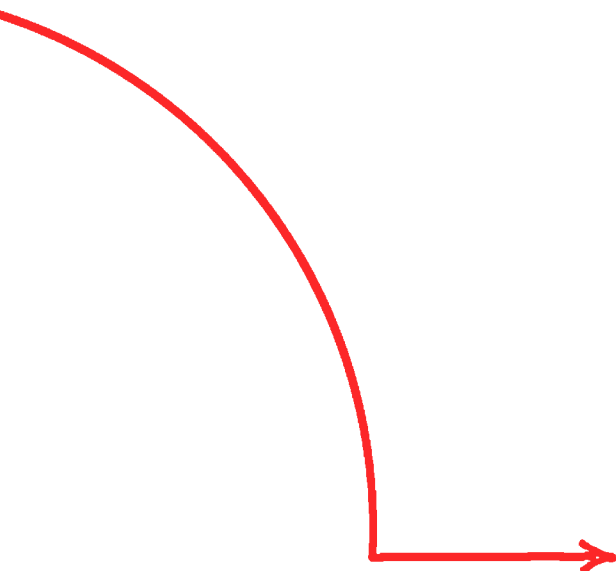
Museums have a responsibility not to ignore these collections but to assess them formally and take appropriate action. The potentially positive outcome of any disposal ought to drive the decision-making process.

Disposal of collections requires dedicated resources, but frameworks exist to help museums to secure these. Established criteria are also in place which can equip staff to make decisions on whether under-used collections should be prioritised for research to make them accessible; considered for alternative uses such as demonstration, handling or set dressing; transferred elsewhere to complement existing collections and be better able to 'earn their keep'; or dispensed with completely.

Positive Communication

It is crucial that the sector is confident both about the process and procedures of disposal, and about communicating this function as an essential part of constructive collections management to stakeholders and the public.

Museums can help each other enormously by sharing their experiences of disposal, providing peer support where appropriate and ensuring that the guidance, skills and mechanisms required by all involved are up to date and relevant.



Supporting stewardship

Collections care and conservation are fundamental museum functions which – given the sector’s commitment to enabling unprecedented levels of access and opportunity to engage – are becoming ever more challenging. Much can be achieved by taking an incremental approach to raising standards as part of organisational forward planning, and support can be secured when the public benefits of this work are successfully promoted.

Planning Collections Care

Adherence to a conservation or collections care plan as part of a wider collections management regime undoubtedly assists museums. Its use can help not only to raise organisational awareness of the importance of this work but to allocate resources, identify specific responsibilities and prioritise actions to ensure the long term preservation of collections.

Numerous published standards and tools exist which can be used to improve collections stewardship. These include freely available factsheets and guidelines, benchmarking self-assessments, dedicated software programmes and on-line discussion groups.

Sharing Resources

Even with limited resources, improvements to collections care can be made when examples of good practice are shared and acted upon. Some museums are going further, collaborating on mutual organisational need and goals, considering how they might pool resources and employing expertise to best advantage.

Museum partnerships exist in many forms all over the country and have proved an effective mechanism for sharing skills, funding shared posts, group training programmes and joint project initiatives.

North Ayrshire Museums Forum – Joint CAT Training Event

In 2005 SMC launched the CAT (Condition Assessment Tool), a computer software programme designed to help museums assess, record and use information about the condition of their collections effectively.

North Ayrshire Museums Forum is committed to developing standards of collections management and care and so members decided to apply for project funding to explore the full potential of this tool through a facilitated training session with a collections care specialist. The session included an introduction to the general principles and practices of condition assessment and specific application of the CAT.

Those who attended included volunteers from local independent museums and local authority museum staff who wanted to improve their knowledge of current practice with a view to meeting the Accreditation Standard. A representative of the Irvine Burns Club described the session as a ‘real eye opener’ and the CAT as a ‘main tool’ not just for understanding collections condition, but in prioritising conservation work and compiling collections information for insurance assessments.



Raising the Profile

Research suggests that many museum visitors are interested in 'behind the scenes' collections work. Accordingly, the sector has invested substantially in publicly demonstrating collections management activity and illustrating conservation principles and procedures.

Some museums organise collections work to take place in open laboratories or galleries. Others arrange regular store visits or actively involve users and volunteers in the care of collections. Increasingly permanent, strategic developments have taken place and more open, visible and study stores have been constructed. Evaluation of the impact of these initiatives will assist the wider sector to advocate this crucial work and argue for future support.

City of Edinburgh Museums Collections Centre – Public Study Space and Tours

The City of Edinburgh Museums Service is one of Scotland's largest local authority collection holders. It cares for over a quarter of a million objects so diverse that they featured under every collection type of the 2002 National Audit survey.

'Doors Open Days' and organised tours of the refurbished Collections Centre provide regular opportunities for individual visitors and special interest groups to explore some of the collections which are not on display in the city's museum venues. A study room is also available by appointment, should anyone wish to examine or study a specific object.

Conservators who lead tours of the Centre take the opportunity to explain the housekeeping methods employed and to answer questions about the various activities involved in collections care.

SMC visit to the City of Edinburgh Museums Collections Centre.



Working together

Museums in Scotland work with a variety of different partners and are aware of the mutual benefits successful collaboration can bring. Joint collections-focused initiatives however, tend to happen on an ad hoc basis and rely on individual goodwill or circumstance to develop. More museums would benefit from mainstreaming partnership working, making an organisational commitment to resource, staff and sustain this vital activity.

Subject Specific Networks

New subject or collection specific networks are being trialled and existing ones developed in many disciplines. Whilst the overall success of these will be established through formal evaluation, there is increasing expectation across the sector that they will provide stimulating forums for sharing specialist knowledge and expertise, and formulating strategic approaches to collections use and development.

To be effective, partners must agree their aims and remit and be prepared to share responsibilities and risks. Flexibility is essential to ensure a range of organisations can contribute as capacity allows and that networks are able to accommodate changing needs and priorities.

Scottish Coal Collections Group – Creating a Consortium

In 2004, the Scottish Mining Museum instigated creation of a consortium of museums situated in historic coal mining areas. Partners signed an agreement formalising existing relationships and establishing their shared aim to promote and preserve coal mining collections in Scotland.

The Group distributed a questionnaire to assess the scope, scale and effective management of publicly held collections in museums, libraries, archives and universities. Findings will progress the long-term goals of improving intellectual and physical access, assessing condition and conservation priorities and planning collaborative programmes to collect or rationalise collections where necessary.

The Group secured initial funding from a number of sources including SMC, the Coal Authority and Scottish Coal.



Sculpted Malagan head from New Ireland, McLean Museum and Art Gallery, Greenock.

Increasing Loan Activity

Inter-museum object loans can complement or refresh fixed displays to great effect, whilst touring exhibitions are an established means of sharing collections and resources. Such activity is to be encouraged – not only to attract new and repeat visitors but to develop relationships between different types of museums and encourage greater understanding of diverse collections and skills.

The process of applying for and receiving loans between museums must be made easier. Research needs to be undertaken to consider how barriers that impede this activity, particularly issues of inhibitive costs and high levels of security or environmental control, can be addressed.

Sharing Skills and Experience

Informal methods of sharing skills and experience, through networking and peer support for example, have always been enjoyed across the Scottish museum sector. But today's focus on workforce development, along with declining availability of specialist expertise, mean it is essential that museums regularly evaluate the development opportunities they offer staff and volunteers.

A National Workforce Development Strategy for Scotland's Museums encourages adoption of a learning culture where management, curatorial and collections specialist skills are nurtured. More museums could progress this aim by formalising programmes for individual development such as shadowing, secondments and internships – and committing the resources required to implement these.

Preventive Conservation Forum (PCF) – Collections Care in Practice

PCF is an informal group open to anyone with an interest in preventive conservation and collections care. It operates primarily through a free email discussion list, where individual members are encouraged to post their questions or concerns – and those with relevant experience, information or advice to offer do so in response.

The Forum arranges several meetings annually, such as the visit in 2005 to the National Trust for Scotland property at Newhailes, East Lothian. The House & Collections Officer and Head Conservator provided a tour of the building and shared their experiences of working with the collection, their progress with care and remedial conservation and plans for further development.

Members, who include both volunteers and professional museum staff, also enjoyed this as a valuable networking opportunity and useful discussion session about the collections care implications of having historic objects on open display.

A framework for change

Responsibilities and Actions

Responsibilities

SMC will drive implementation of this strategy by advocating the importance of collections development with stakeholders on a national level. We will work directly with museums to support good practice and initiate programmes that create the context for strategic change.

We look forward to working with key partners who all have a significant part to play in the successful implementation of this strategy.

These may include:

- AIM (Association of Independent Museums)
- Higher education providers
- ICON (Institute of Conservation)
- Local authorities
- Museums Association
- MDA (Museum Documentation Association)
- MLA (Museums, Libraries and Archives Council)
- National Galleries of Scotland
- National Museums Scotland
- National Fund for Acquisitions
- Non-national museums sector
- Scottish Arts Council
- Scottish Executive
- Scottish Museums Federation
- SLAM (Scottish Local Authority Museums)
- Subject Specific Networks
- UMIS (University Museums in Scotland)

Actions

The goals and priorities identified at the outset have been used to formulate a three-year action plan as detailed on pages 23 and 24. This will be further developed over the lifetime of this strategy in consultation with museums and partner organisations.

Acknowledgements

Many people have offered their time, shared their experiences and voiced their aspirations for the sector to assist the creation of *A National Collections Development for Scotland's Museums*.

SMC's Collections Development Manager Gillian Findlay managed the process throughout which an Advisory Panel of senior UK museum professionals, representing a broad range of interests, contributed knowledge and expertise. This was chaired by Susan Jeffrey of Paisley Museum and Art Galleries, Renfrewshire Council, to whom we are particularly grateful.

The Panel also included:

- Jim Arnold, New Lanark World Heritage Site
- Chris Bailey, Northern Ireland Museums Council
- Jane Carmichael, National Museums Scotland
- Maurice Davies, Museums Association
- Joanne Orr, Scottish Museums Council
- Emma Roodhouse, Scottish Museums Federation
- Evelyn Silber, Hunterian Museum & Art Gallery, University of Glasgow
- Peter Winsor, MLA (Museums, Libraries and Archives Council)

An internal SMC working group provided operational support and ensured that this strategy complements the three others currently in operation in *ICT*, *Learning and Access* and *Workforce Development*. All SMC staff have contributed to the process.

Aidan Walsh Consultancy carried out initial scoping work, produced the stakeholder questionnaire and facilitated the consultation meetings.

Many museum staff, volunteers and stakeholders participated either in person or through the electronic questionnaire.

SMC sincerely thanks all contributors.

Action Plan

CDS Action Framework

1. Increase public access to more collections

2. Develop opportunities for individual and community interaction with collections

3. Open collections to new and diverse audiences

4. Promote interpretive planning to improve display and communication of collections

5. Encourage communities to become involved in core collections activity and policy creation

6. Improve quality of on-line collections information

7. Commit resources to evaluate and improve visitors' experience of collections

8. Share examples of good and innovative practice in engaging people with collections

9. Increase adherence to collections management standards, procedures and tools

10. Prioritise and resource documentation projects for collections of proven public interest

11. Develop community-orientated 'knowledge-gathering' programmes to enrich collections

12. Encourage research strategies and initiatives to make collections more accessible

13. Commit resources to develop collections knowledge

14. Explore mechanisms for securing and sharing collections expertise

15. Address succession planning and knowledge retention issues around collections

16. Increase staff and volunteer confidence in developing collections

Key priority:
Engaging people

Key priority:
Improving knowledge

Key priority: Shaping collections

17. Advocate the importance of active collections development
18. Develop use of new technologies to share collections information
19. Encourage greater use, promotion and review of collections policies
20. Support initiatives which encourage confident and strategic collections development
21. Commit resources to developing collections through acquisition, disposal and loan
22. Work with stakeholders to address barriers to active acquisition and disposal
23. Explore potential for collaborative collections development activity
24. Communicate the rationale for and benefits of strategic disposal

Underpinning priority: Supporting stewardship

25. Advocate organisational benefits of a planned approach to collections care
26. Commit resources to stewardship activity
27. Encourage wider adherence to published stewardship standards
28. Share exemplars of innovative practice in collections care
29. Support joint collections initiatives, networks, projects and posts
30. Consider impact of public-facing collections management activity

Underpinning priority: Working together

31. Encourage mainstreaming of collaborative collections work
32. Promote joint collections initiatives and subject specific groups
33. Encourage increased loans activity to broaden use of collections
34. Support formalised workforce development opportunities for collections staff and volunteers
35. Share examples of good practice through partnership

Further sources of information

Arts & Humanities Research Council

www.ahrc.ac.uk

Museums and Galleries Research Programme, integrated strategy supporting and sustaining research in UK museums, galleries, libraries and archives.

Collections Link www.collectionslink.org.uk

Single point of access to collections management resources including factsheets and guidance notes, telephone and e-mail advisory service and database of training and skills development opportunities.

Conservation Register www.conservationregister.com

Accredited conservators directory listed by specialism or location, factsheets on commissioning a conservator and collections care.

ICON: The Institute of Conservation www.icon.org.uk

Conservation news and events, publications and resources, CPD, education and training opportunities, collection-specific Group pages including Care of Collections Group information.

Interpret Scotland www.interpretscotland.org.uk

Interpret Scotland Journal and factsheets, news, forthcoming events and job vacancies.

MDA: Museum Documentation Association

www.mda.org.uk

Advice Point telephone and e-mail advisory service, SPECTRUM museum documentation standard, factsheets and good practice publications, news and training opportunities.

Museums Libraries and Archive Council

www.mla.gov.uk

Accreditation Scheme for Museums, MGC legacy security and collections care factsheets,

Acceptance in Lieu, Government Indemnity Scheme, cultural property information including spoliation and illicit trade.

Museums Association www.museumsassociation.org

Collections for the Future, *Code of Ethics for Museums*, policy documents and consultation responses, ethical guidance notes on acquisition and disposal, suppliers directory, news, events and job vacancies.

Scottish Executive www.scotland.gov.uk

Scotland's Culture and research documents, cultural resources directory, funding and events information.

Scottish Interpretation Network

www.scotinterpnet.org.uk

Interpretation news and training opportunities, discussion forum, reports and research, good practice information.

Scottish Museums Council

www.scottishmuseums.org.uk

The National ICT, *Learning and Access* and *Workforce Development Strategies*, *A National Audit of Scotland's Museums*, collections management and care resources including Preventive Conservation Forum joining information, Accreditation and funding opportunities.

Touring Exhibitions Group www.teg.org.uk

Touring Exhibitions Handbook, news and articles, seminars and events, exhibitions for hire.

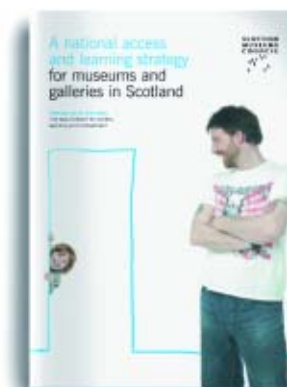
UK Registrars Group <http://ukrg.org/Index.php>

Courier guidelines and loan report templates, quarterly newsletters, events and seminars information, collections management resources and skills directory.

A National Collections Development Strategy for Scotland's Museums is one of four national strategies developed and published by the Scottish Museums Council in consultation with the sector and key partner organisations.

1. Learning and Access Strategy
2. ICT Strategy
3. Workforce Development Strategy
4. Collections Development Strategy

For copies of any of these strategies, please phone 0131 550 4100 or email: inform@scottishmuseums.org.uk



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Scottish Museums Council
The Stack
Papermill Wynd
McDonald Road
Edinburgh EH7 4QL

A large print
version of the
text is available
on request.



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Tel (Switchboard) 0131 550 4100

Fax 0131 550 4139

E-mail inform@scottishmuseums.org.uk

Web www.scottishmuseums.org.uk

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