



Crafts Study Centre: Documentation Policy 2020-2025

Introduction

The Crafts Study Centre (CSC) is committed to caring for its collections and to providing continued and improving access to the collections and the knowledge we hold about them. We recognise the importance of maintaining and enhancing our documentation in order to achieve these aims. This policy will guide the work that the CSC does in the field of collections documentation.

Aims and objectives

This policy is intended to ensure the CSC fulfils its responsibilities in relation to:

- the continued security of information we hold about the collections
- maintaining at least the minimum professional standards in documentation for all objects and archival items
- improving the standard of documentation to a high level for as many objects/archives as possible
- providing and improving access to information about the collections
- meeting legal and ethical standards

This policy applies both to objects which are a permanent part of the CSC's collection and to loan objects for which the CSC is temporarily responsible.

Security

The CSC will ensure the physical security of the records in its documentation systems and the long-term preservation of those records. It makes security copies of key records such as Accession Registers and ensures that these are stored in a secure place. It also ensures that electronic data is held on the University for the Creative Arts server where it is regularly backed-up.

Access

The CSC is committed to ensuring that its documentation allows access to information to staff and researchers.

Information about the object collections is primarily available online via the VADS website (<http://www.vads.ac.uk>). Ongoing problems with the back-end of the VADS website, and a reluctance to create new object records on the Centre's out-of-date collections database in recent years has meant that this has not been significantly updated since the collections were first added to VADS c.2004. However, VADS has undergone a major upgrade in Spring/Summer 2020 and the CSC's database is also due to be upgraded by the end of 2020. This means that it will be easier to add object collections to VADS as they are catalogued at the CSC.

Information about the archives collections is primarily available online via the Archives Hub website (<http://archiveshub.ac.uk>). A major update to the CSC's entries was undertaken in Spring/Summer 2020 – and new records will be added to the Archives Hub on an ongoing basis.

The long-term availability of physical documentation such as acquisition records and accession registers will be safeguarded through the use of archival storage materials and the digitisation of records where appropriate.

Standards

The CSC is committed to following SPECTRUM, the UK Collections Management Standard. It will meet the minimum standards for SPECTRUM's Primary Procedures in:

- Object Entry
- Acquisitions and accessioning
- Location and movement control
- Cataloguing
- Object exit
- Loans-in
- Loans-out

All objects are documented to the minimum professional standards upon accession into the collection, according to the guidelines in SPECTRUM. This ensures that for each object/group of objects there is:

- proof of legal title through standardised object entry forms
- an accurate record in the accessions register
- a unique object number
- a collections record (ideally a digital record on the collections database – all new acquisitions since January 2018 are catalogued directly onto the database)
- an up-to-date location recorded

The CSC will catalogue its collections with a high level of accuracy and detail, with the support of subject specialists if required. In the case of objects, the CSC will follow SPECTRUM standards and the level of cataloguing defined by past curators; in the case of archives, the CSC will follow ISAD(G) standards.

The CSC aims to accession and catalogue individual items within a year of acquisition. This period may be significantly longer for large-scale bulk acquisitions of objects and archives, such as the collection of the Edward Johnston Foundation acquired in December 2018 (containing 10,000+ items). In some cases, particularly in archives, the CSC will accession a collection but will not catalogue it for several years.

To ensure that documentation standards are kept consistent throughout staff turnover, a Documentation Procedures manual will be maintained. It will cover the practical implementation of this policy and will provide relevant training to all staff to which the procedures are relevant.

Once the database has been upgraded, there will be a large-scale project to transfer catalogue records from hard copy catalogues, box lists, Word documents, Excel documents etc. to the database to create digital records for each item. It is also intended that the outcome of each significant collections management interaction with an object (e.g. conservation, use in exhibitions, loans etc) will be recorded on the database.

The CSC has a successful track-record of enhancing the quality of object documentation from these minimum requirements to a high standard, including recording detailed descriptions, contextual history, physical characteristics, images, references and other associated information. This process will be continued in two ways: on an individual basis as and when new information becomes available; and in a systematic way through the securing of funding for cataloguing and research projects.

Ethics and legislation

The CSC observes the Museums Association code of ethics in all aspects of its practice.

Access to information about the collections is provided in a way which is consistent with relevant data management legislation. This includes, but is not limited to, the Freedom of Information Act (2000), the General Data Protection Regulations (2018) and the Environmental Information Regulations (2004).

The CSC recognises that new archival acquisitions may contain sensitive and personal information relating to the living which may be of some concern to a potential donor. In such cases the CSC will observe the wishes of that individual to restrict public access to certain categories of information contained in an archive, e.g. by applying the '30 year rule' or other restrictions set out by the donor – and these restrictions will be recorded on the database. In all cases, the CSC will exercise discretion, filter items of a sensitive nature and restrict public access to them.

The CSC maintains a system of rights management to ensure the intellectual rights of artist-makers* (or, in the case of the deceased, their executors) whose work is represented in the collections are observed, particularly in relation to the reproduction of such works. The CSC holds the intellectual rights to a number of artist-makers. This system was compiled c.2003 and it is intended that it will be reviewed and updated in the period of this policy (2020–2024).

* The CSC appreciates that artist-makers use many different words to describe themselves – artists, makers, craft makers, craftspeople etc. – and has chosen to use 'artist-maker' as a representative and inclusive term.

Name of governing body: Crafts Study Centre Trustees

Date on which this policy was approved by governing body: 24 September 2020

Policy review procedure: The Documentation Policy will be reviewed from time to time, at least once every five years.

Date at which this policy is due for review: September 2025