

# **NMSI Collections Management Strategy Statement**

#### Context

NMSI holds the United Kingdom's National Collection in science and technology, including engineering, transport, medicine and media, encompassing museum objects and library and archive collections.

NMSI exists, under the terms of The National Heritage Act 1983, to develop, manage and make this collection useful for the public. The Act requires it to preserve, care for and add to the objects in its collection, to exhibit them to the public and to make them available for study and research, and to promote the public's enjoyment and understanding of science and technology, and of the development of those subjects.

NMSI's Corporate Plan commits it to delivering a life-enhancing experience through a high impact creative offer, based on the management, development and use of world class collections that are relevant to audiences both today and in the future. Collections management in its different components encompasses the means by which NMSI sustains its existing holdings to serve this mission and deliver this vision. Appropriate collections management activity enables it to preserve the scientific and technological heritage, enabling NMSI to share its collections with audiences now and in the future.

NMSI follows the principle that it will share its collection widely. This objective is mainly delivered through public programmes of displays, events, publications and websites. Objects from the collection are either displayed in its museums, or made available via loans to third parties, or else they are in store for future use.

## Vision

The NMSI collection will be sustained as the world's best maintained, most accessible and best understood material and visual record of science and technology.

## **Collections Management Statements and Aims**

## Storage and Care

The collection is displayed and stored according to NMSI standards for the prevention of material deterioration; these are based on international standards and current research.

Library and archive storage facilities and exhibitions are based upon and informed by the requirements of BS 5454 and The National Archives Standard for Record Repositories.

Collections management and care are regularly reviewed by NMSI to ensure adherence to these standards, and compliance with emerging British and international standards such as PAS 198 and CEN/TC 346.

### NMSI will:

- keep all objects in conditions in which they do not deteriorate;
- undertake conservation so that objects may successfully be made accessible to audiences;
- manage hazards in the collection with clear and effective systems to ensure public, staff and object safety.
- review and modify its procedures in the light of developments in conservation science and practice.

#### Documentation

Objects in the collection are documented in accordance with Arts Council for England (formerly MLA) requirements, SPECTRUM and PAS 197.

Records proving title or relating to the history of objects in the collections are managed in accordance with the requirements of the Public Records Act and NMSI's status as a designated Place of Deposit.

Information relating to the history and management of objects in the collection is held within the collections management system. This constitutes the primary record of the collection and is subject to regular review.

Information relating to the NMSI's library and archive collections is held within local management systems. It is made accessible to the public subject to relevant legislation.

#### NMSI will:

- have secure title to all objects in the collection;
- hold basic data on every object so that it can be uniquely identified and the collection audited regularly;
- ensure records relating to objects in the collection are enhanced and made available to audiences.

#### Curation & Audiences

NMSI actively promotes, enables and undertakes research into the material and non-material culture of its collection and subject matter.

Research enables NMSI to deliver a cultural public programme through a variety of outputs and media.

NMSI will ensure through research that the object, library and archive collections are sufficiently well understood that they may serve the other functions of: preservation, care, collecting and rationalisation, display, and making accessible for study and research by others.

Such research will be funded externally and internally, in partnership with organisations from the UK and overseas.

The NMSI Research Strategy provides further details of this policy.

### NMSI will ensure that:

- the collection is sufficiently well understood that publics may gain benefit from what the Museums hold on their behalf, whether they are visitors to its exhibitions and websites, enquirers, or scholars
- objects are in the best places to maximise their value to audiences by, for example, pursuing opportunities to loan-out un-displayed objects.

## **Individual Museums**

Each of NMSI's component museums specialises in different subject and collections areas.

- The Science Museum curates its collection in four main subject areas: Medicine; Science;
   Information and Communications Technologies; and Engineering Technologies.
- The National Railway Museum curates its collection in five main subject areas: The Origins
  of Railways; The Impact of Railways on Our Lives; The Impact of Railways on Our World;
  The Impact of Railways on Our Culture; The Science and Technology of Railways.
- The National Media Museum curates its collection in four main areas: Photography (encompassing photographic technology and photographs); Cinematography; Television, (incorporating radio broadcast) and New Media (including gaming).

# **Appendix: Governing Principles**

The following is a list of legislation, guidelines and standards which the NMSI must adhere to when dispensing its core functions and activities, and which govern or influence the policy set down in this document. Further, specific information about the scope and relevance of this legislation may be found on-line:

- National Heritage Act 1983
- Museum's Association Code of Ethics (2007)
- MLA Accreditation Standard
- Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property (UNESCO, 1970)
- Dealing in Cultural Objects (Offences) Act 2003
- Treasure Act 1996
- Guidance for the Care of Human Remains in Museums (DCMS, 2005)
- Spoliation of Works of Art during the Holocaust and World War II period: Statement of Principles and Proposed Actions (NMDC, 1998)
- Code of Practice on Archives for Museums and Galleries in the United Kingdom (3rd ed., 2002)
- Health & Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and related health and safety legislation
- The Railway Heritage Act 1996
- Public Records Act 1958 and information rights legislation

NMSI Collections Trustee Sub-Committee 10 November 2010