

Carmarthenshire Museums Documentation Policy Statement (2017-2022)

Governing Body:

Carmarthenshire County Council

Approval date: month 2017

Review date: month 2020



INTRODUCTION

Museum documentation is the management of information about collections. Recording collection information is central to being accountable for the collections, their accessibility, care, management, research, study, interpretation and use.

Documentation therefore underpins every aspect of Carmarthenshire Museums' activity.

Our policy for the documentation of the collections is to ensure that the information we hold relating to the collections is accurate, current, secure, reliable and accessible.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this Policy is to ensure that we fulfill our guardianship, stewardship and access responsibilities. Through implementation of this policy, our objectives are to:

- Enable Carmarthenshire Museums to meet the requirements of the Museum Accreditation Scheme;
- Demonstrate commitment to meeting minimum professional standards in documentation procedures and collection information and attain the very highest standards wherever possible;
- Improve accountability for the collections;
- Enable the service to care for objects by making collections information accessible;
- Extend access to collection information for all other legitimate uses;
- Allow the service to respect the rights of others, whilst also protecting its own rights;
- Strengthen the security of the collections;
- Ensure our credibility with emergency services, insurers, funding bodies, potential donors and the public.

ACCOUNTABILITY

The museum will follow the accountability principles defined by the Museums and Galleries Commission;

"to enable museums to fulfill their fundamental responsibilities for collections and the information associated with them. The principles are that a museum should know at any time exactly for what it is legally responsible (this includes loans as well as permanent collections), and where each item is located." (MGC 1993)

LEVELS OF DOCUMENTATION

Carmarthenshire Museums is committed to recording significant information about items in our care so that each object we are legally responsible for (including loans as well as long term collections) can be identified and located.

For the majority of our collections, service staff will document to individual item level. However, for certain collections, for example bulk archaeological excavation

material, it is neither feasible nor practical to document the material in this detail, and we will document items at group level.

Accreditation requires that SPECTRUM Primary Procedures (Object Entry, Acquisition, Cataloguing, Location and Movement Control, Loans in, Loans Out and Exit) are used.

These procedures are in place and are applied to all current collections management activities. However, the information held by Carmarthenshire Museums about objects in the existing collections does not always meet the minimum standard for these procedures. This will be addressed retrospectively to raise the level of catalogue detail.

Additional SPECTRUM procedures will be introduced according to the demands of the service and any future Accreditation requirements.

Each SPECTRUM primary procedure is outlined in individual policy notes relating to the procedure.

All primary procedures are outlined in the Documentation Procedural Manual.

These documents are available on the shared computer drive and in hard copy at Carmarthenshire County Museum/Carmarthenshire Record Office.

COMPUTERISATION OF RECORDS

Carmarthenshire Museums aims to create and maintain a fully digitised computer catalogue by 2020, which will assist the service to manage collections better and make information available more easily to its users.

At present records are a mix of physical and digital sources. More detail is available in the Documentation Procedural Manual.

The current CALM (v.9.3.0) database supports the SPECTRUM Primary Procedures. CALM was introduced to the service in 2003. It supersedes a FileMaker database, which replaced the manual data entry system in 1992. All electronic records have been migrated into CALM. CALM sits on the council server at a central location separate to the museum service.

In October 2017 the service has a total 41,200 accession records across both formats.

Of the 41,200 records, 13% exist only as physical record cards and need to be transferred into the database.

Of the 41,200 records, 17% represent the records migrated into CALM from FileMaker. This data needs to be verified for consistency with the records created since 2003.

The service will address these weaknesses as part of a process of continuous improvement of the information held on the database in order to achieve our aim.

CONTROLLED ACCESS TO SENSITIVE INFORMATION

All requests for information will be considered in terms of compliance with the Freedom of Information Act (2000) and Data Protection Act (1998) and the Environmental Information Regulation (2004). We will review requests for confidential data such as donor information, environmental information, valuations or site details on a case-by-case basis, and in accordance with the applicable legislation and any legal agreements or conditions of gift.

SECURITY AGAINST LOSS OF IRREPLACEABLE COLLECTION INFORMATION

We have in place measures to ensure the physical security and long-term preservation of all documentation records, whether paper or computerised. We will update manual and computerised records as appropriate.

Carmarthenshire County Council has a regular back-up cycle for the database on the Council's server, which ensures that data is not lost.

All physical record cards will be archived once equivalent digital versions have been created and the service is satisfied that the digital record is a true record. However, key documents such as accession registers and original receipt documentation recording loans and accessions will be kept with Carmarthenshire County Council Modern Records.

In order to ensure that our current database does not become obsolete, the service will remain informed of technological advances and ensure the long-term accessibility of the information held.