

RGU Art & Heritage Collections

DOCUMENTATION PROCEDURE MANUAL

2013-2018

Name of governing body: **Robert Gordon University**

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Art & Heritage Collections Statement of Purpose

'The University Art & Heritage Collections give students, staff and the wider community inspiration, learning and enjoyment by preserving and presenting historic artworks and artefacts which reflect the history and achievements of Robert Gordon University.'

1. Introduction

The purpose of this manual is to provide clear instructions to ensure a standardised approach to the recording of information about RGU Art & Heritage Collections.

The manual summarises the documentation procedures in place for the collections and provides instructions on how to implement them.

References

SPECTRUM: the UK Documentation Standard
MDA Fact Sheets
Collections Link (www.collectionslink.org.uk)

2. History of Documentation of the Collections

The Robert Gordon University received its MDA code ABDRG in 1995 and a running number sequence was introduced for accessioning items in the 'Museum' Collection. When the University Library was given responsibility for the collections in 2004, the same running number sequence was used, but beginning at 10,000 so as to avoid any risk of duplication. In 2006, a new sequence based on the year of acquisition, plus a running number beginning again in January each year was introduced for new accessions. However, the old running number sequence was still used for retrospective documentation until 2009.

3. Present practice

3.1. Object Entry

To record any object entering the care of the Art & Heritage Collections team, for any reason, use the RGU Museum Object Entry Form.

This is a triplicate form: the white copy, once signed, should be kept in the Entry Forms folder in the Art & Heritage Collections office; the blue copy should be kept with the object until it is either accessioned or returned; the pink copy should be given to the depositor as a receipt.

Blank Entry Forms are kept in a box file on the same shelf as the Entry Forms folder. Inside the box file is a folder containing numbered blank forms and it is from this folder that forms should be taken for use.

3.2. Acquisition

Transfer of title is achieved by use of the 'Additional Agreement' section of the RGU Museum Object Entry Form, whether items are purchased, donated or bequeathed.

Separate forms are used for transfer of copyright (used for oral history recordings) and for copyright licensing (usually used for contemporary art work).

Reference should be made to the Acquisition and Disposal Policy.

3.3. Location and Movement Control

The Collections Curator is responsible for authorising the movement of all Art & Heritage Collections items.

Object locations are recorded in MIMSY in the 'LOCATION' activity

3.4. Cataloguing

A catalogue record brings together information resulting from other procedures. The generation of object description, identification, historical and contextual information usually begins at the entry and acquisition stages and develops as the result of research.

A catalogue record for an object from the Art & Heritage Collections should contain all the available key information about the object. Other sources of information, such as the Object Files, should be cross-referenced with the database.

3.5. Accession Numbers

Two different Accession Number sequences have been used, each following the unique MDA identifier 'ABDRG' for the collection. These are firstly a five digit running number sequence that was used to record all objects until 2006, and secondly a new sequence which was introduced for all new acquisitions. This is made up of the year of acquisition, a full stop and then a running number, eg 2007.12.

The old running number was retained for retrospective documentation until 2009 when it ceased to be used, and the year number system is used in all cases.

3.6. MIMSY Database

The following table is a list of basic fields in the MIMSY "Object Authority" database. Fields should be completed as fully as possible in accordance with the notes in the table.

Accession number	Record the unique ABDRG number of the item. e.g. ABDRG 2012.500 Part numbers should be used with caution but when used they should be designated in the following way: ABDRG2012.500.1 ABDRG2012.500.2 ABDRG10200.3ABDRG2012.500.3 etc They may be recorded in the field as: ABDRG2012.500.1-3 ABDRG10200.1-3
Collection	MIMSY can record items as belonging to specific collections here, and a pre-entered list of these can be shown when inputting data
Classification	MIMSY records broad subject keywords here, and a pre-entered list of these can be shown when inputting data
Subject Taught	MIMSY records the names of classes and courses taught at RGU here, and a pre-entered list of these can be shown when inputting data
Object Name	MIMSY records the generic or common name of the item here, and a pre-entered list of these can be shown when inputting data e.g. Landscape Sculpture Napkin Hot water bottle cover Meat tenderiser Valve (boxed) Vase
Title	By default this should read 'Untitled'. Where a title exists it should be recorded. Note alternative titles, eg The Tapestry Weavers (detail), a.k.a. The Fable of Ariachne
Maker	Record surname first. If unknown record as 'Unknown'. e.g. Sivell, Robert Findlay, Graeme and Andrews, Lucy Mimsy will create an accessible record of all names and variations of names and will also record specific details and contact information about the maker on the linked 'People Authority' database. Some copyright information is also recorded in the 'People Authority' database.
Place made	MIMSY records place names according to a pre-entered hierarchy and they can be selected when inputting data
Date Made	If unknown, record as Unknown. MIMSY records dates according to a specific style, and details of possible variations and options can be selected when inputting data
Materials	MIMSY records art media and materials of manufacture here, and a pre-entered list of these can be shown and details of possible variations and options can be selected when inputting data
Measurements	MIMSY records measurements according to a pre-selected formula, and details of possible variations and options can

	be selected when inputting data. The dimensions of separate elements of the object may be recorded here, such as the Picture Frame as well as the main canvas
Description	This is a free text field for a brief description
'Label', 'Inscriptions', 'Credit Line', 'Provenance' and 'Use'	These fields are used occasionally to supplement the main description
Home Location	MIMSY records location names according to a pre-entered hierarchy linked to the 'Location Activity' database and these can be selected when inputting data
Location	MIMSY records location names according to a pre-entered hierarchy linked to the 'Location Activity' database and these can be selected when inputting data
Note	Free text field for extra information
Condition note	By default 'Unknown'. Mimsy records condition reports on the linked 'Condition Activity' database and specific details are required by the system when inputting data
Conservation	By default 'None known', or if it is certain that no conservation work has been done, as e.g. with newly created works put 'None'. MIMSY records conservation reports on the linked 'Conservation Activity' database and specific details are required by the system when inputting data
Copyright status	MIMSY records this in a separate Copyright field usable in the 'People Authority' and the 'Object Authority' databases. By default, if copyright status is unknown, 'Pending' should be selected. If Copyright permission has been requested and an answer received, then this is recorded as 'Approved', 'Rejected' or 'Restricted, as appropriate. .Also, see above under 'Maker'
Creator	MIMSY records the initials of one of the registered MIMSY users here and the date and will also record updaters.
Exhibitions	By default this should read 'None known'. If it is known that a work has not been exhibited enter 'None'. Details can be recorded on the 'Exhibition Activity' database, otherwise in the Notes field.
Title	By default this should read 'Untitled'. Where a title exists record it, e.g. The Wheel that turns the Water Sunset over Garthdee The Tapestry Weavers (detail), a.k.a. The fable of Ariachne
Value	Where a valuation exists or a recent purchase price is available record the value followed by the source and date to best available level of accuracy). Otherwise, record either as 'Required' or 'Not required' as appropriate. If multiple valuations list them all chronologically, separated by a semi-colon, e.g.

	£350 (purchase price 2004) £800 (Bonhams 17/11/2004); £900 (Sothebys 08/02/2005)
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3.7. Loans In and Out

Refer to the Internal Loans Policy and External Loans Policy.

While initial enquiries can be made verbally, all loan requests must be received in writing: internal borrowers should complete the Internal Loan Request Form, which is available on the RGU Art & Heritage Collections web pages.

There is an assumption against accepting long term or permanent loans and we do not hold any of these at present.

3.8. Retrospective Documentation

The Art & Heritage Collections has a programme to tackle its documentation backlogs and enhance the quality of existing documentation.

Please refer to the Documentation Policy and Plan.

3.9. Object Exit

The RGU Object Exit Form is used for all accessioned objects leaving the University either permanently or for an agreed period. The Exit Form is not used for internal loans, which are controlled via the Loan Agreement Form only. External Loans (ie loans outside RGU) are controlled by the Exit Form.

The signed copy of the Exit Form must be kept in the Exit Forms lever arch file in the Art & Heritage Collections office.

The Exit Form should be completed and signed by a member of the Art & Heritage Collections team and signed by the person receiving the object(s).

The Exit Form should be completed as fully as possible, although sometimes, eg in the case of conservation work, it may not be possible to give a precise return date.

Refer to the relevant policy: for loans out, refer to the External Loans Policy, for disposal, refer to the Acquisition and Disposal Policy.

4. Labelling and Marking

All objects must be labelled or marked - or where neither is possible, their container clearly marked - with the Accession Number.

When making a pencil mark, use a soft pencil such as a 2B and avoid exerting too much pressure.

Do not use sticky labels on objects, as these leave a residue when removed and can also become detached over time or when it is displayed.

Do not rely on numbering bags or envelopes which may easily become detached from the object, especially when it is displayed.

The table below gives guidance on the location and nature of the marking/labelling for different categories of material. Before marking an object, always check first that the technique you plan to use is appropriate.

Object	Nature of Mark	Location of Mark
Framed Artworks	Indelible mark	Back of stretcher & frame
Unframed oil paintings	Indelible mark	Back of stretcher
Drawings	Pencil mark	Back of page
Books	Archive ink mark	Rear paste-down end leaf or fly leaf
Ceramics/Glass	Indelible mark	Base, avoiding foot (reverse side if base inaccessible)
Textiles & embroideries	Sewn-on label	On the reverse at the corner
Furniture	Indelible mark	Top right-hand side of the side of cabinets and tables; right-hand side of seat rail back for chairs
Electrical Equipment	Indelible mark	Rear or Base

5. Photography

Photographs of objects are another form of documentation. Each object should be photographed at least once for purposes of 1) identification, 2) recording condition, 3) publication and other commercial and non-commercial uses such as publicity, website etcetera.

Three grades of image (TIF, JPEG and Thumbnail) are stored in folders on the main RGU server as follows,

*[/mnt/collections/Media/fullsize/](#)
[/mnt/collections/Media/medium/](#)
[/mnt/collections/Media/thumbnails/](#)*

Additional raw format NEF files are currently retained on a NAS drive.

Individual image files recorded and attached in the Mimsy Media Authority are linked to the appropriate MIMSY Object Authority accession record. This is achieved by creating a link from an image record to the appropriate object record by using the Linked Object field. New image file names are created to match the MIMSY Object accession numbers. However, the ABDRG prefix is omitted from the image filename and a dash is used instead of any full stops so object ABDRG2013.500 is linked to photograph number 2013-500. This number is attached to all three grades of image which are kept in the three separate folders listed above.

6. Locations of Documentation

6.1. Accession Register

A full back-up copy of the Accession Register is made every 6 months and is stored in the locked collections store at Gray's School of Art.

6.2. Collections Inventories

Various historic inventories have been compiled since the 1980s and earlier, these are held in the Art & Heritage Collections office

6.3. Entry Files

The completed white copy Entry Forms are kept in a lever arch file in the Art & Heritage Collections office. When a form is removed for any reason, a photocopy – clearly marked 'COPY' is put in its place.

A box file in the office contains blank Entry Forms.

6.4. Exit Files

Completed Exit Forms are stored in a lever arch file in the Art & Heritage Collections office.

A box file in the office contains the blank Exit Forms.

6.5. Loan Files

The loan files are stored, by year, in the 'Collections Files' filing cabinet drawers.

6.6. Copyright Documentation

All signed copyright licence agreements are stored in lever arch files on shelving in the Art & Heritage Collections office.

6.7. Object Files

Paperwork relating to individual objects is stored in Accession Number order in the filing cabinet drawer marked 'Object Files' in the Art & Heritage Collections office or in the individual artists name files, if appropriate (see 4.8, below).

6.8. Subject Files

Paperwork relating to collections subjects is stored in the filing cabinet drawer marked 'Subject Files' in the Art & Heritage Collections office. The section on the art collection contains information on individual artists, filed alphabetically.

7. Reviewing the Manual

Information about the **Documentation Procedural Manual** will be available on our website www.rgu.ac.uk/collections and social media as appropriate.

We will review the Documentation Procedural Manual at least every 5 years

The date of the next review is January 2018