

# **RGU Art & Heritage Collections**

## **COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT (Care & Conservation) PLAN**

**2013-2018**

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

Date on which this policy was approved by management body: **8 August 2013**

Date at which this policy is due for review: **31 Jan 2018**

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20/08/2013

## **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. PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT (Care & Conservation) PLAN**

- 1.1. This is the plan for the management of the Robert Gordon University Collections for the period 2013-18.
- 1.2. The purpose of the plan is to ensure that the University Collections are relevant and well cared for in order to render them useful and accessible.
- 1.3. Documentation is the subject of a separate set of documents (Documentation Procedure Manual, Policy and Plan 2013)

### **2. THE UNIVERSITY COLLECTIONS Scope**

- 2.1. The University Art Collection forms the largest part of the University Collections. The majority of work dates from the 1950s to the 1970s, but there is also a significant quantity of earlier and later work, with a heavy bias, being corrected in current collecting, towards painting, drawing and printmaking.
- 2.2. The University Architecture Collection contains student drawings dating from the 1920s to the 1970s and some digital work, collected since around 2006. This Collection also contains a large number of antiquarian books.
- 2.3. The University Pharmacy Collection contains equipment used in the School of Pharmacy, and supplementary donated items.
- 2.4. The University Engineering Collection contains School of Engineering equipment that has been retained. Much historic equipment has been disposed of over the years and research is needed to establish the significance of what remains.
- 2.5. The Domestic Science Collection contains notebooks, samples of dressmaking and catering and laundry equipment. This collection is alive, in that graduates and their relatives often enquire about it and offer material.
- 2.6. Other collections contain material relating to the general history of the University and now-defunct schools such as Navigation.
- 2.7. All of the above collections also contain related photographs and ephemera.

### **3. GENERAL POINTS**

- 3.1. Collections care and conservation will be undertaken by or in consultation with a professional conservator.

- 3.2. Care and conservation of the collections will take place in compliance with all appropriate laws and in line with best practice and the Museums Association's Code of Ethics for Museums.
- 3.3. Collections care and conservation information will be communicated to staff via Team and Staff meetings and by internal email.
- 3.4. Collections care and conservation information will be communicated to users via, for example:
  - labels in cases where objects have been removed / on any collections care equipment
  - verbally by curator, assistant and other staff
  - press releases, website, blog and written articles where appropriate
- 3.5. The MLA's Benchmarks in Collections Care will be used to assess the care of collections stored at the Gray's School of Art, the Clarke Building and the external store; and on display within the buildings at Robert Gordon University

## 4. STORAGE

**Collections are currently stored in the following locations:**

### 4.1. Gray's School of Art:

- 4.1.1. There is a secure storeroom on the 2nd floor mezzanine, dedicated to work from the collections. The ceramic collection was relocated to this room from the 1st floor mezzanine in January 2007.
- 4.1.2. The store has good environmental conditions, but no monitoring has been carried out in the other locations. The store is locked and is accessible to Art & Heritage Collections staff. The janitors at Gray's do not have a key for this room, but the Technical Services Co-ordinator in the building has a key for emergency use.
- 4.1.3. In addition, the drawing collection is openly available in a resource room (Fine Art Staffroom) and the print collection is openly available in an office (Printmaking Staffroom).
- 4.1.4. Other large (unaccessioned) items such as printing blocks and items from the cast collection are stored in semi-secure areas of the 1st and 2nd floor mezzanines. Both mezzanine level corridors pose considerable health and safety threats and are not suitable as work areas. Most of the more portable casts were moved out of these corridors and into the secure storeroom in 2006.

### 4.2. Georgina Scott Sutherland Library:

- 4.2.1. The antiquarian book collection and the Needlework Development Scheme Collection are stored in the Antiquarian Room, (GSS 529) which doubles as a meeting/study room. No environmental monitoring has been carried out in this area. Keys for this room is available to Library and Collections staff. The cleaners also have access to these rooms.
- 4.2.2. Other material (Ephemera, some fine art and domestic science) is held in the current Art & Heritage office (GSS 316)
- 4.2.3. Occupation of both these stores is time limited and we move out in 2013 or 2014
- 4.2.4. **Schoolhill:** Storeroom (C108) in the basement of the Clarke Building, contains material relating to Engineering, Pharmacy, Domestic Science and Navigation. No environmental monitoring has been carried out in this store. The store is locked and accessible to RGU Collections staff and the Faculty Service Officers in the Clarke Building.
- 4.2.5. A display of pharmacy material is currently held in the reception area of the School of Pharmacy and Life Sciences in the Technical Building, Schoolhill

### 4.3. Target Position

Our aim is to bring the stored collections together in accessible off-site storage with acceptable environmental conditions and good security, by 31<sup>st</sup> December 2013. At the time of writing we are in negotiation with Estates Department RGU and are awaiting their proposals

### 4.4. Actions for Improvement

- 4.4.1. Assess environmental conditions in GM02C storage areas
- 4.4.2. Develop upgraded off site storage with Estates Department by December 2013
- 4.4.3. Upgrade the packing and storage within all storage areas
  - to facilitate the move to new storage and
  - to optimise new storage areas space
- 4.4.4. Move any collections out of the mezzanine corridors in Gray's school
- 4.4.5. Improve access to collections within stores.
- 4.4.6. Carry out the recommendations of our RGU Documentation Plan 2013-18

## 5. CONSERVATION (Preventative and Remedial)

### Objects in Storage

- 5.1.1. A programme of conservation has been instituted, with additional conservation work being carried out for exhibition or other projects.
- 5.1.2. A conservation survey of the cast collection was undertaken in 2006.
- 5.1.3. Regular visual inspections of the paintings collection is carried out
- 5.1.4. The environment is monitored using Hanwell Environmental Dataloggers in the following locations: Shore Porters, collections store at Gray's School of Art, exhibition space in the Georgina Scott Sutherland Library (inside and outside the display cases). This data is downloaded monthly and appended to a continuous log
- 5.1.5. No monitoring is carried out in the collections store in the Clarke Building soon to be vacated or in other display locations.
- 5.1.6. Data from Hanwell Environmental Dataloggers is examined when downloaded and filed at S:\Collections\Collections Public\Hanwell dataloggers

### Objects when on Display

- 5.1.7. Our permanent display areas are in the public floor of the Business School and in circulation space Faculty of Health and Social Care as well as the display in School of Pharmacy mentioned above
- 5.1.8. The Business School display area receives direct sunlight and neither it nor the Faculty of health area is directly invigilated

### 5.2. Target Position

- 5.2.1. All significant objects and collections to be brought up to a displayable or otherwise useable condition.
- 5.2.2. All areas where collections are stored and are displayed to be continuously monitored for temperature and relative humidity and the data stored and analysed.
- 5.2.3. All storage and display areas to be optimised for collections care standards , as advised by a conservator.

### 5.3. Actions for Improvement

- 5.3.1. Most urgent remedial conservation work will continue to be prioritised and a programme of remedial work continued with a professional conservation studio registered with the UK Institute of Conservation
- 5.3.2. Continuous environmental monitoring will be extended to the collections store in the new store and GM02C. 6 monthly reports will be analysed to monitor the environmental monitoring data and make recommendations for improvements.
- 5.3.3. In the Business School display areas, anti-light measures will be used such as
  - Limited exposure
  - Shading of sensitive items such as textiles and watercolours and other organic material
  - Use of UV light filter glass in display cases
- 5.3.4. The new storage areas will be designed as far as possible to optimise environmental conditions for collections care and to avoid damage caused by handling

## **6. SECURITY AND RISK MANAGEMENT**

### **6.1. Current Situation**

- 6.1.1. Steps have been taken to improve the security of artworks on loan throughout the University, including the introduction of security screws for fixing 2D artwork.
- 6.1.2. Internal and External Loan Policies should address the problem of members of staff either removing artworks on loan to them from their locations without consulting the Library.

### **6.2. Target Position**

- 6.2.1. Security of buildings reviewed and improvements undertaken where required.

### **6.3. Actions for Improvement**

- 6.3.1. Obtain professional internal advice on the security of buildings containing collections, via Estates security survey. Obtain additional security advice pertaining to the collections where required.
- 6.3.2. Update Emergency Plan for the University Collections.
- 6.3.3. Introduce and strengthen key control procedure.

## **7. VALUATION AND INSURANCE**

### **7.1. Current Situation**

- 7.1.1. The University has insurance cover for buildings and their contents, via Royal Sun Alliance.
- 7.1.2. The contents of Shore Porters are insured separately, based on an estimated total value of the artworks.
- 7.1.3. There are few valuations of objects in the Collections which can be considered up-to-date and accurate.

### **7.2. Target Position**

- 7.2.1. Rolling programme in place for the valuation of the collections, with up-to-date valuations maintained for the most valuable or significant collection.

### **7.3. Actions for Improvement**

- 7.3.1. Prioritise objects of high financial, artistic, or cultural value for valuation.
- 7.3.2. Carry out valuations of a sample (approx 10% of the contents of the art collection).

## 8. REVIEW AND RATIONALISATION

There is conflict between ensuring the long-term preservation of a collection and ensuring that it is accessible and is used appropriately so a programme of rationalisation is proposed.

### 8.1. Current Position

A programme of rationalisation as described below, has been begun.

### 8.2. Target Position

We aim to incorporate review and disposal into the management of the University Collections to ensure that the collections remain fit for purpose, while maintaining a long-term viewpoint.

### 8.3. Actions for Improvement

- 8.3.1. A working group will be set up to examine each collection, using the Acquisition and Disposal Policy and the collecting criteria agreed by the Collections Purchase Group or its successor and any other relevant criteria, such as condition.
- 8.3.2. This group should include appropriate academic staff (who may be parallel to Honorary Curators) and the Collections Purchase Group or its successor and could result in some objects being used directly in teaching in departments
- 8.3.3. This group should include appropriate external advisors where appropriate
- 8.3.4. A process of deaccessioning and disposal will tackle those items which are graded for disposal. This process will be governed by the conditions of the Acquisition and Disposal Policy, which favours transfer to another public collection where possible. See the RGU Collections Forward Plan 2013-14 for further information

## 9. Reviewing the policy

- 9.1.1. Our **Collections Management Plan** will be available on our website [www.rgu.ac.uk/collections](http://www.rgu.ac.uk/collections) and social media as appropriate.
- 9.1.2. We will review the Collections Management Plan at least every 5 years
- 9.1.3. The date of the next review is January 2018,