



Comhairle Cathrach
Bhaile Átha Cliath
Dublin City Council

Dublin City Council

Collections Management Policy



Contents

Introduction	2
Purpose	2
Mission.....	2
Roles and Responsibilities.....	3
Legal and Ethical framework.....	3
Scope of Collections.....	3
Development	4
Acquisitions and Accessions	4
Criteria for Acquisition	5
Approval of Acquisitions	5
Donations.....	5
Disposal, Deaccessions and Decommissioning	6
Access and Use	6
Documentation	6
Documentation Backlog.....	6
Rights and Reproduction	7
Loans (in and out)	7
Collections Care	8
Review and Revision	8
Appendices	9
Appendix 1: List of Relevant Dublin City Council Policies and Procedures	9
Appendix 2: Scope of Collections.....	10

Introduction

Purpose

Dublin City Council's collections are one of the City's greatest cultural assets and a priceless resource for learning, engagement, creativity and enjoyment. They promote social cohesion and well-being by supporting a sense of place and identity for the people who live, work and visit Dublin. They play an important role in education (formal, informal and lifelong learning) and have the potential to support economic development of the City, through cultural and creative industries and tourism.

The purpose of this Collections Management Policy is to establish a written policy for the management, development, use, care and preservation of collections owned and managed by the Council. It provides an overarching framework to document the processes that govern the management of the Council's collections. The policy was developed by the Collections Working Group convened of representatives from Libraries & Archives, the Culture Company, Archaeology, Heritage, City Arts Office and the Hugh Lane Gallery. It is designed to establish common goals and a clear sense of overall purpose to ensure collections are consistently managed and to define the roles and responsibilities of the parties involved. It aims to ensure that Dublin City Council fulfils its responsibilities in relation to the acquisition and disposal of collections, in line with its statutory obligations, corporate planning and annual business plans.

Through this policy, Dublin City Council will strive to ensure that:

- collections are made accessible to the public, while ensuring they are protected, secure and cared for;
- objectives are established and adhered to that guide the strategic development of the collections; and
- collection management is conducted in a manner that conforms to the Council's commitment to excellent public service and reflects the highest ethical standards and international best practice.

This policy recognises the decentralised nature of many of the Council's collections that are managed locally. It is acknowledged that, with the guidance of professional expertise, certain sections require the development of additional procedures in order to adhere to the principles outlined. This policy should be read in conjunction with section, collection or site-specific policies and procedures (see [Appendix 1: List of Relevant Policies and Procedures](#)). This policy is designed to help inform and develop these policies, not supersede them.

Mission

In writing this policy, the Working Group is cognisant of the guiding principles identified in the Council's Corporate Plan (2020-2024) and its mission:

to drive the sustainable development of the City through strong civic leadership and delivery of effective services that promote the well-being and quality-of-life of citizens and communities.

It also acknowledges the vital role the Council's collections play in achieving its vision to create 'a dynamic, sustainable city, that is future-ready, built on thriving, inclusive neighbourhoods and communities, a strong economy, a vibrant cultural life, and compact, connected growth.'

Roles and Responsibilities

Unless otherwise specified in existing policies and procedures, it is the Designated Official who is ultimately responsible for the collections, ensuring that collection management policies, guidelines, and procedures are developed and implemented, and that staff follow them in a consistent manner. It should be noted that the Hugh Lane Gallery Trust Limited and Dublin City Council Culture Company are registered companies and are governed in line with their own constitution or memorandums of association.

Legal and Ethical framework

Dublin City Council will work to ethically and respectfully collect and disseminate collections. Promoting them for the enjoyment, learning, engagement and creativity of the people who live, work and visit Dublin. The Council will ensure that it fulfils its responsibilities in line with its statutory and legal obligations in respect of the collections it holds. It will strive to provide excellent public service that reflects the highest ethical standards and international best practice in terms of collection care, curation and development.

In matters of collections acquisition, disposal, care, management and use, the Council will, where appropriate, take account of relevant legal and ethical frameworks and procedures that include, but are not limited to:

- Museum Standards Programme for Ireland's *Standards and Guidelines* (2014)
- International Council of Museum's *Code of Ethics for Museums* (2013)
- Museums Association's *Code of Ethics for Museums* (2015)
- Data Protection Act (2018)
- Freedom of Information Act (2014)

Scope of Collections

Dublin City Council owns, or has custodial responsibility for, wide ranging and substantial collections that include buildings, physical and digital objects, works of art, archives and information. They encompass objects of artistic, social, civic, industrial and historical significance relating to the cultural, architectural and social histories of Dublin and its people. The Council is responsible for the physical and intellectual integrity of these collections, balancing the requirements of public access in the present with the need to

preserve them for future generations. The scope of the collection is summarised in [Appendix 2](#).

Development

As a public service organisation and the local democratic leadership of the city, Dublin City Council has an inherent obligation to focus on the needs and quality of life of its citizens. The ongoing development of the collections is vital in order to better represent and engage people living, working and visiting Dublin. The Council is committed to providing excellent public service, based on the core local values of honesty, integrity, impartiality and serving the common good. Dublin City Council will ensure that both acquisition and disposal are carried out openly and with transparency. The Council accepts the principle that sound curatorial reasons must be established before consideration is given to acquisition to or the disposal of any items in the collection.

Given the diverse nature of the Council's collections it is not possible to establish a simple statement that covers all areas of collecting. However, the objectives for the development of the collections will be guided by:

- Strengthening and providing context to existing collecting areas
- Bridging identified gaps in existing collection areas and acquiring items not currently represented in the collections
- Improving the diversity of the collections
- Presenting Dublin nationally and internationally as a centre for excellence and an exemplar of best practice
- Ensuring the relevance and quality of the collections, through the pursuit of active and informed contemporary collecting
- Acquiring items that are rare and represent the best examples of their kind
- Acquiring items of relevance to Dublin City
- Acquiring items of national and/or international significance
- Enhancing existing exhibitions and public display across Dublin City Council sites
- Supporting temporary exhibitions, public displays and engagement programmes
- Supporting research activity and driving the transmission of knowledge
- Ensuring public access to art and culture for all (physically and digitally)
- Raising public awareness of the value of culture and heritage and of the responsibility of all to contribute to their care and development

Acquisitions outside these stated objectives will only be made in exceptional circumstances.

Acquisitions and Accessions

The Council acquires collections through a variety of methods including, purchase, gift, donation and bequest. Unless governed by an existing policy or procedure, acquisitions will be undertaken in accordance with these principles and the standards set by the Museum



Standards Programme for Ireland (MSPI) and the International Council of Museum's *Code of Ethics for Museums*. Dublin City Council has a commitment to the ethical management of culturally sensitive objects in its collections and a policy of entering into discussion with culturally affiliated individuals or communities regarding the identification, storage, and treatment of sensitive objects. Material will only be acquired if it is well provenanced and has a documented recent history and clear title of ownership can be transferred to Dublin City Council; where curatorial expertise is absent, a cautious approach to acquisition will prevail.

Criteria for Acquisition

The decision to acquire an item will be based upon these considerations:

- quality and physical condition
- available resources to acquire, document, preserve, conserve, store, and exhibit the object or collection
- relevance to the collection development objectives
- relevance to the mandate of the Dublin City Council
- significance, such as association with an event, person, historical period, or place
- opportunities for use, exhibition, research, and other programs
- cultural sensitivity
- documentation to support ownership, authenticity, study, and use
- absence of potential risk to users or to other elements of the collection
- absence of restrictions on use or disposal
- compliance with relevant legislation and regulations

The Council will occasionally agree to acquire or temporarily house material deemed to be at risk of destruction or loss. This is, generally, in response to an emergency or a crisis situation. The decision to ultimately acquire or dispose of these collections is dependent on resources being made available to document, conserve and store them. The responsibility for deciding this rests with the Designated Official, acting on recommendations and consultation from relevant Council staff or the Collections Working Group.

Approval of Acquisitions

If an acquisition policy or procedure is not in place, then authority for the acquisition of objects normally rests with Designated Official acting on recommendations from relevant Council staff.

Donations

Unless otherwise specified in existing policies and procedures, all objects offered as donations will be considered based on their historic relevance and significance and the collections development objectives outlined above.

Disposal, Deaccessions and Decommissioning

When reviewing collections for disposal, the Council will ensure that procedures used meet professional standards and will not undertake disposal motivated principally by financial reasons. The process will be documented, open and transparent. There will be clear communication with key stakeholders about the outcomes and the process. It will ensure that any decision taken to dispose, deaccession or decommission will not reduce the quality or significance of the collection and will result in a more useable, well-managed collection.

Access and Use

Dublin City Council is committed to supporting Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that states ‘everyone has the right to freely participate in the cultural life of the community’. This is reflected in the Council’s corporate vision and local economic and community plan goals. Ensuring public access to the collections (physically and digitally) is key to achieving this. For the purpose of this policy, access is defined as something that is made possible when physical, cultural, social, sensory, intellectual, financial, emotional and attitudinal barriers are removed or reduced. Dublin City Council is committed to providing accessibility to all by eliminating and reducing these barriers to ensure full and equal access and engagement with the collections and public displays. The Council is responsible for balancing the requirements of public access in the present with the long-term preservation of the collections for the future.

Documentation

Dublin City Council is committed to creating and maintaining good quality and up to date information about its collections, by adhering to the appropriate national and international standards. Documentation is fundamental to effective collections management, as it facilitates the use of collections to their full potential by staff and stakeholders. This enables access and allows the Council to be properly accountable for the objects in its care. Unless otherwise specified in existing policies and procedures, the Council has an obligation to establish systems for the preservation of the data and records regarding the items in its collections. Targeted research will be routinely commissioned by the Council on specific areas of the collections to assess and evaluate them, inform their future development and aid raising public awareness.

Documentation Backlog

Basic documentation records should be generated for all collections owned and managed by the Council. As a minimum standard these records include, accession number, catalogue number, object name, description, date, provenance/source, condition, location and image. The introduction of a collections management system (CMS) for material not held on a database and managed by Libraries & Archives, Archaeology, Heritage and the City Arts



Office would help address this backlog. It would allow staff to efficiently standardise documentation, manage loans, track information on ownership, copyright, reproduction rights and licensing.

There are also groups of material and valuable datasets (physical and digital) held by the Council that require formal accessioning and digital archiving, to ensure compliance with the European Open Data and Public Sector Information Directive, some of which are listed in [Appendix 2](#).

Rights and Reproduction

Dublin City Council is committed to providing access to its Collections by making images or digital copies available to the public. However only those items that are free from copyright restrictions, held in good title, or that have permission from the owner/donor, photographer or copyright holder will be made available for use. Copyright permission must be sought for commercial use of images or digital surrogates, including publications. Reproduction or licensing fees may be applied but are assessed on a case-by-case basis, depending on the proposed usage. The Council reserves the right to deny reproduction requests for any reason.

Loans (in and out)

Loans out from the collections increase access to objects not on display and help widen audiences beyond Dublin City Council's physical sites. They also further knowledge, promote appreciation and scholarship, and strengthen the reputation of Dublin, nationally and internationally. The borrowing organisation will normally be expected to cover all costs incurred to transport, display and insure the object/s during the length of the loan agreement and must provide a standard of care that meets or exceeds those currently applied by the Council.

The Council will occasionally borrow items for public display to strengthen and provide context to its own collections. The Council will ensure that it follows the procedures prescribed by the lender and provide the standard of care and security required. When borrowing from an individual or organisation with no lending procedure in place, the procedures used by the Council will be followed, reflecting best practice.

Unless otherwise specified in existing policies and procedures, authority for agreeing to lend or borrow objects normally rests with the Designated Official acting on recommendations from relevant Council staff. The evaluation of loan requests (inward or outward) will take into account the physical condition of an object/s. The purpose of the loan must support the Council's corporate vision and not pose undue risk to the collection item/s. All



documentation for incoming and outgoing loans will be retained, including relevant signed receipts, condition reports, and insurance assessments.

Collections Care

Dublin City Council recognises its responsibility to create and maintain a protective environment for the collections in its care, whether in store, on display or in transit. Striking a balance between the long-term preservation of the collections and the provision of access is key. Responsibility for care of the collections will be assigned to persons with appropriate knowledge and skill. Good housekeeping practices will be maintained in stores and training in handling provided to reduce the likelihood of accidental damage to both objects and staff.

Condition assessments will be carried out regularly and these will be used to inform and prioritise the conservation needs of the collections. The Council will not collect objects that it cannot reasonably preserve and maintain in appropriate environments.

Ensuring the collections are protected in the event of an emergency is a priority. The Designated Official responsible for each collection will ensure that an Emergency Plan is put in place for effectively dealing with potentially harmful situations and to minimise risk of damage to collections.

Unless governed by an existing policy or procedure, collection care will be undertaken in accordance with the standards set by the Museum Standards Programme for Ireland (MSPI) and the International Council of Museum's *Code of Ethics for Museums*. Historic buildings and their interiors are considered as much a part of the collections as the objects and will be managed with an equal degree of care and expertise.

Review and Revision

This Collections Management Policy is a working document and will be reviewed every three years by Dublin City Council's Collections Working Group to ensure it remains relevant.

Revision History		
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Prepared by:	Dublin City Council's Collections Working Group	
Date	Revision Description	Rev. Change
4 February 2022	Draft Policy version 0.1 issued	0.1

Appendices

Appendix 1: List of Relevant Dublin City Council Policies and Procedures

This Collections Management Policy should be read in conjunction with the following:

- Dublin City Council's Corporate Plan (2020-2024) [Available [online](#)]
- Dublin City Development Plan (2016 – 2022) [Available [online](#)]
- Dublin City Development Plan (2023 – 2028) [Link to be added once published]
- Dublin City Council's Strategic Heritage Plan (2022-2028) [Link to be added once published]
- Dublin City Council Public Libraries' Collection Development Policy (2014) [Available [online](#)]
- Policy for Commemorative Naming and Infrastructure and the Provision of Monuments, Memorials and Plaques (2017) [Available [online](#)]
- Policy and Procedures for the Management and Development of Public Art in Dublin City (2009) [Available [online](#)]
- Policy for Decommissioning of Public Art (2009) [Available [online](#)]
- Dublin Civic Museum: Assessment & evaluation of collections (2008)

Dublin City Council Cultural Company was constituted as a Company Limited by Guarantee under the Companies Act 2014 in 2018.

- Dublin City Council Cultural Company's Collections Management Policy (2020)

Hugh Lane Gallery

The Hugh Lane Gallery has been awarded full accreditation through the Museum Standards Programme for Ireland (MSPI). The Hugh Lane Gallery Trust Limited is a company established in 1998 under the Companies Acts 1963; it is a wholly owned company of Dublin City Council. The Gallery's collection is managed in accordance with the following policies:

- Hugh Lane Gallery's Acquisitions, Loans and Exhibition (ALE) Policy (2018)
- Hugh Lane Gallery's Collections Care Policy (2018)
- Hugh Lane Gallery Trust Ltd – Code of Governance (2016) [Available [online](#)]
- Agreement between The Board of Trustees of The National Gallery, Dublin City Council and the Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media in relation to the Sir Hugh Lane Bequest 1917 (2021)

Appendix 2: Scope of Collections

<p>Dublin City Council Public Art Collection</p> <p>Dublin City Council has a public art collection of over ninety public sculptures and statues ranging in date from 1857 to the present day. The collection also includes artworks on display in the Civic Offices and other City Council properties. A number of policies set out procedures for the commissioning and donation of permanent artwork including <i>Policies and Procedures for the Management and Development of Public Art in Dublin City</i> and <i>Policy for Commemorative Naming of Infrastructure and the Provision of Monuments, Memorials and Plaques</i> (see Appendix 1).</p>
<p>Dublin City Council Culture Company</p> <p>Dublin City Council Culture Company is authorised to collect, preserve, and maintain objects related to the mission statement and goals of the company to initiate, implement and manage cultural programmes and buildings. The Company works with people in the city to create new artworks which form part of its collection. The Company also collects oral histories relating to Dublin life and the life of its people and other digital records relating to Culture and the City. The Company may also collect objects which are determined to be of immediate or future need of use in interpreting the stories and educational programmes developed by the Company. The Company cares for Collections as authorised by Dublin City Council for it to access or hold in case for a given use or period. The Company’s Collections Management Policy was approved in 2020 (see Appendix 1).</p>
<p>Dublin City Libraries & Archives</p> <p>Dublin City Libraries manages, maintains, and builds on existing collections, both print and digital, and develops new collections, to meet the needs of library users, responding to demands and meeting many different needs. The collections support the pursuit of pleasure, leisure, learning, business, information, and life-long learning. With the aim to promote access to, and use of, the widest possible range of traditional and digital library collections and resources both locally and online. Note: Dublin City Council Public Libraries has a separate Collection Development Policy in place (see Appendix 1).</p> <p>The Dublin and Irish Collections contain an extensive range of material relating to Dublin and Ireland, the nucleus of which is John T. Gilbert's valuable library of mainly 17th and 18th century books and manuscripts, purchased by Dublin Corporation after his death in 1898. It includes a considerable collection of material dating from the 16th to the 21st centuries and has an active acquisitions policy focussed on material in all formats relating to the history of the City and its people.</p> <p>Dublin City Archives contains records of the civic government of Dublin from 1171 to the late 20th century. These records include City Council and committee minutes, account books, correspondence, reports, court records, charity petitions, title deeds, maps and plans, and drawings all of which document the development of Dublin over eight centuries. Dublin City Archives also acquires private collections that relate to the history</p>



of the city of Dublin or to individuals who worked within the Municipal City. Dublin City Archives is also responsible for the storage of historic Dublin City Council Planning Application Files for the period 1952-1988 inclusive, and Dublin City Archaeological Archive (DCAA) which preserves records arising from archaeological investigations conducted in Dublin City by archaeologists working in the private sector.

Civic Museum Collection

Dublin Civic Museum closed to the public in September 2003 following a 50-year history of collecting. During its time the museum acquired a large amount of material, much of it relating to the heritage of Dublin. The core of the collection was put together by the Old Dublin Society (ODS). In 2007 the Council and the Old Dublin Society agreed the formal transfer of the collection to Dublin City Council, thus safeguarding its future within the public domain. Dublin City Council commissioned Eneclann, an archive consultancy company, to catalogue the Civic Museum collection to make it accessible for research purposes. Much of the collection is in controlled long-term storage, which has been approved for its purpose by the City Council.

Archaeology

The **Dublin City Archaeological Archive (DCAA)**, managed by DCLA, contains the original site records from many archaeological investigations conducted in Dublin city. The core remit of the archive is to preserve records arising from archaeological investigations conducted in Dublin city by archaeologists working in the private sector. Under Dublin City Council planning conditions, the accession of archaeological archives is now mandatory. For the purposes of the DCAA, archaeological archives are all parts of the archaeological record including digital records as well as written, drawn and photographic documentation.

The Dublin City and County Archaeology GIS project and the Dublin City Industrial Heritage Record (DCIHR) are two largescale digital datasets of archaeological heritage data developed and managed by the Heritage and Archaeology sections with County Heritage Plan grant support and spatially presented online for free on heritagemaps.ie. The datasets are not currently archived.

The Archaeology section has rescued and currently manages important archaeological and heritage material including environmental samples from an archaeological excavation and the historic civic weights and measures which require a permanent solution regarding storage and management.

Hugh Lane Gallery

Hugh Lane Gallery houses an internationally significant collection of modern and contemporary art in Ireland. The original collection donated by Sir Hugh Lane (1875-1915) and his supporters is renowned for including some of the most famous impressionist paintings in the world including works by Manet, Monet, Degas and Renoir. The gallery also has one of the most important collections of Irish art. The donation in 1998 of the studio of Francis Bacon (1909-1992), one of the 20th Century's greatest artists, has added



to the reputation of the gallery. The gallery also houses an outstanding collection of paintings and prints by Sean Scully (b. 1945).

The collection comprises over 2,100 artworks including paintings, prints drawings, stained glass, sculpture and video. In addition, the gallery holds the Francis Bacon Archive, the Harry Clarke Archive and the Esmonde Bequest of miniatures. The works in the Sir Hugh Lane Bequest 1917 are managed in partnership with the National Gallery, London. The Hugh Lane Gallery continues to acquire works for the collection, with particular emphasis on contemporary art. All purchase and donations are governed by the Acquisitions, Loans and Exhibition (ALE) Policy and are approved in advance by the Board of the Hugh Lane Gallery Trust, as are all loans from the collection.

Heritage

The Heritage Office implements the Dublin City Strategic Heritage Plan (2022 – 2028). A key goal of the heritage plan since 2002 has been to create knowledge through thematic surveys and research projects. To date a large and broad-ranging body of research data has been amassed, some of which has been published. The organisation, wider dissemination and archiving of this growing body of digital data will be a key objective of the new plan. Another key objective of the heritage plan is to record oral histories, and document both the material culture and intangible heritage of Dublin and Dubliners.