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Collections Management

Collections Development Policy

(Former Acquisitions & Disposal Policy)

Produced by:

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Approved by:

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 Karen Rigg, Chairman Collections Management Committee

Authorised Board of Trustees:

.....Date.....

**Colin Heaton, Chairman Board of Trustees,
 The Tramway Museum Society**

Date for next review: February 2019

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Collections Development Policy

Name of museum: National Tramway Museum

Name of governing body: The Tramway Museum Society

Date on which this policy was approved by governing body: April 2014

Date at which this policy is due for review: February 2019

1. Museum's statement of purpose:

The Mission of The Tramway Museum Society is:

- *To maintain for the benefit of the nation an operating tramway museum.*
- *To promote the permanent preservation of tramway vehicles and equipment, and items of general transport interest (either historic, scientific or educational) and to work as necessary with other institutions, societies and bodies, having similar aims, in any part of the world.*
- *To promote and further the study of, and research into, tramways and other forms of transport.*

2. Overview of current collections

The National Tramway Museum is a single subject museum and all of its collections are Designated under the Arts Council England Designation Scheme as being 'An Outstanding Collection' and nationally representative of tramway history.

The collections cover the period from the date considered as the introduction of street running tramway systems (c.1830 USA, c.1860 UK) to present. Material prior to those dates will be considered to illustrate the development of technology that influenced later tramway technologies, or as contextual evidence of the influence of the introduction of tramway systems.

The collections cover all aspects of tramway history and include collections of bus, trolleybus and railway material to provide a contextual picture of the development, operation and decline of the British tramways. Overseas material is also collected for the same purpose.

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The collection falls into the following sub-divisions:

Tramcar and tramway vehicle collection

The Museums tramcar and tramway vehicle collection consists of nearly 80 historic vehicles, which illustrate the development and evolution of the British tramcar, as well as the vehicles used to service the tracks and overhead equipment.

The collection has developed based on the principle of acquiring an example of 'each important stage in the evolution of the British tramcar', a principle which covered the technical development and the various design layouts for the accommodation of passengers and crew. There are more than 20 different tramway systems represented within the collection, and all the leading tramcar manufacturers are represented.

The oldest tramcar in the collection is a horse tram from 1873 used in Oporto, Portugal and manufactured in this country at Birkenhead. There are several other horse drawn tramcars in the collection. The steam era is represented by a tramway locomotive used in New South Wales, built in Manchester in 1885 and a typical passenger carrying trailer car from Dundee, dating from 1894.

The first electric tramcars are represented by Blackpool 4, which dates from 1885. This was one of the first fleet of electric tramcars to operate on the street of a British town.

Other vehicles in the collection represent the development of the electric tramcar across the period 1900 – 1960, and they include the Museums first acquisition Southampton Corporation Tramways No. 45 built in 1903, to the ultra-modern Leeds Railcoach No. 602 which was built in 1953.

Tramway infrastructure

The Museum's operating tramway runs for 1 mile from the terminus at the southern end of the Museum, 'Town End', through the 'Village' of reconstructed, newly built and original buildings.

The track displays features traditional to the first generation of British electric tramways. The overhead power lines, similarly, are constructed to be authentic to that of the original British tramways.

The Museum has followed a stated objective of creating a period street around the tramcar collection to demonstrate the vehicles in a traditional setting. The buildings and street furniture have been drawn from a variety of locations.

The Red Lion public house is a traditional ceramic and terracotta façade and stood opposite the Stoke tramways depot. The Burnley Tramways Traffic Office façade is a relic of that tramway system and stood adjacent to the Yorkshire

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Penny Bank façade also saved by the Museum. The Derby Assembly Rooms building is a grade 2 listed building.

Library

The National Tramway Museum's Library holds the most complete collection anywhere in the country of books, pamphlets and reports covering the history of British, North American, European and other foreign and light railways. For example there is a comprehensive collection of Acts of Parliament (from the Ministry of Transport) covering tramways, railways and trolleybuses. Material on modern rapid transit systems and second-generation tramways is also being collected.

Printed book collection

The printed book collection contains descriptions of the world's tramway and light rail systems, as well as works on electric, steam, cable and horse traction, the manufacturers, transport law and town planning.

Periodical collection

The periodical collection includes runs of all the leading journals associated with tramways, and includes one of the most complete runs of Tramway and Railway World in the country. Also collected are magazines covering modern transport, historical research and the work of preservation societies worldwide. There is a large foreign language collection. The collection also covers acquisitions of unpublished theses relating to urban transport.

Archive

The archive holds a large collection from the British Electric Traction company, records previously lodged with the Bus and Coach Council, as well the minutes of associations such as the Municipal Tramways and Transport Association and the Municipal Passenger Transport Association.

Many of the journals and books also contain material on buses, trolleybuses and underground and suburban railways, so the development of a towns transport can be studied in total. Other subjects covered included technical design, labour relations, town planning and the role of women at work.

Technical Drawings

The technical drawings collection, numbers well over 6000 drawings, and includes the drawings of the Electro Mechanical Brake Company, Maley & Taunton Limited, as well as numerous individual operators. There is also a large collection of maps, guides and timetable.

Ephemera

This collection present the wider context of the tramway operations and the items are often personal to a tramway employee or unique to a tramway system.

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Examples include letters, songs and poems, notices, press cuttings, posters, sound recordings, certificates and commemorative items such as stamps, menus, programmes and exhibition catalogues. The number of original postcards in the collection, numbers well over 40,000 and covers world wide street scenes.

Three dimensional objects

Three dimensional objects are also included in the ephemera collection, such as models, uniforms and scientific instruments. Tickets, together with ticket holders and machines, represent the tools of the trade for tram conductors. Buttons, badges , medals and token are also collected.

Photographs

One of the larger areas of the Museum's collections, prints, film negatives, glass plate negatives, lantern slides and colour transparencies have been collected.

The museum's collection is largely made up of individual collections; some donated by members of the society, others taken by professional photographers have been purchased.

Cine Film

The cine film collection, which has more than 600 titles in it, includes historic film footage of tramway operations, as well as commercial productions. The earliest film footage in the collection dates to the late 1890's.
Street furniture.

3. Themes and priorities for future collecting

The National Tramway Museum is a single subject museum. Within the subject the collection falls into the following sub-divisions:

- Tramcars and tramway related vehicles
- Tramway infrastructure
- Tramway and urban transport related documents
- Commercially published works on the subject of tramways, tramcars and urban transport
- Photographic images, postcard images, film and video of tramways and urban transport
- Tramway related ephemera
- Street furniture.

Examples of non-tramway material:

- Urban planning reports / studies;
- Population distribution studies;
- Council minutes;
- Traffic committee reports;
- Material pertaining to the Museum site or local / regional history.

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These cases will be considered on an individual basis by the Curator, or relevant committee.

The Museum will collect material for purposes other than formal inclusion into the collections:

- For the continued maintenance of the operating tramcar collection
- For the development of the contextual street scene
- For development of the interpretative exhibitions
- For the enhancement of the Museum's learning services

The collections cover the period from the date considered as the introduction of street running tramway systems (c1830 USA, c1860 UK) to present. Material prior to those dates will be considered to illustrate the development of technology that influenced later tramway technologies, or as contextual evidence of the influence of the introduction of tramway systems.

A collection is regarded as all material formally accessioned by the Museum, or for which the Museum holds legal title. Ownership of the collections resides with The Tramway Museum Society.

Many areas of the collection are fully representative of their subject. The Museum would seek to prioritise acquisition for those areas of the collections that are regarded as not yet being entirely representative of tramway history.

Current Acquisition priorities would be:

- Horse tramways
- Steam tramways
- 'Alternative power' tramways such as cable, gas, battery or petrol powered
- Early electric (experimental period) tramways
- Pre 19th century, and up to pre WW1 documents and publications
- First and Second World War photographic material

These headings would be subject to the priorities identified within the *Trams Report* and vehicle *Attitude Statements*.

4. Themes and priorities for rationalisation and disposal

The National Tramway Museum has a long-term purpose and possesses permanent collections in relation to its stated objectives. The Society accepts the principle that, except for sound curatorial reasons, there is a strong presumption against the disposal of any items in the Society's collection. Disposals would however be considered where the following criteria apply:

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- a. Research reveals that items do not fall within the categories described in this policy.
- b. Items are found to be, to all intents and purposes, duplicates.
- c. Items have been damaged or have deteriorated beyond the museum's ability to repair them.
- d. Items are discovered to pose a threat to health and safety.
- e. Items have been identified as spoliated during the Nazi, Holocaust and World War II period.
- f. Items have been subject to a request for repatriation or restitution.

Where disposal is being considered this will be carried out in accordance with the disposal procedures, outlined below in clauses 13 (a) to 13 (o). The Museum will also be guided by the Museums Associations 'Disposal Toolkit', 2008.

5. Limitations on Collecting

The museum recognises its responsibility, in acquiring additions to its collections, to ensure that care of collections, documentation arrangements and use of collections will meet the requirements of the Accreditation Standard. It will take into account limitations on collecting imposed by such factors as staffing, storage and care of collection arrangements.

5. Collecting policies of other museums

The museum will take account of the collecting policies of other museums and other organisations collecting in the same or related areas or subject fields. It will consult with these organisations where conflicts of interest may arise or to define areas of specialisms, in order to avoid unnecessary duplication and waste of resources.

Specific reference is made to the following museum(s):

The National Railway Museum
London Transport Museum
National Museums of Science and Industry
Beamish North of England Open Air Museum
The Black Country Museum Living Museum
Relevant transport museums where appropriate.

7. Policy review procedure

The collections development policy will be published and reviewed from time to time, at least once every five years. The date when the policy is next due for review is noted above.

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Arts Council England will be notified of any changes to the collections development policy, and the implications of any such changes for the future of existing collections.

8. Acquisitions not covered by the policy

Acquisitions outside the current stated policy will only be made in very exceptional circumstances, and then only after proper consideration by the governing body of the museum itself, having regard to the interests of other museums.

9. Acquisition procedures

a. The museum will exercise due diligence and make every effort not to acquire, whether by purchase, gift, bequest or exchange, any object or specimen unless the governing body or responsible officer is satisfied that the museum can acquire a valid title to the item in question.

b. In particular, the museum will not acquire any object or specimen unless it is satisfied that the object or specimen has not been acquired in, or exported from, its country of origin (or any intermediate country in which it may have been legally owned) in violation of that country's laws. (For the purposes of this paragraph 'country of origin' includes the United Kingdom).

c. In accordance with the provisions of the UNESCO 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, which the UK ratified with effect from November 1 2002, and the Dealing in Cultural Objects (Offences) Act 2003, the museum will reject any items that have been illicitly traded. The governing body will be guided by the national guidance on the responsible acquisition of cultural property issued by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport in 2005.

d. So far as biological and geological material is concerned, the museum will not acquire by any direct or indirect means any specimen that has been collected, sold or otherwise transferred in contravention of any national or international wildlife protection or natural history conservation law or treaty of the United Kingdom or any other country, except with the express consent of an appropriate outside authority.

e. The museum will not acquire archaeological antiquities (including excavated ceramics) in any case where the governing body or responsible officer has any suspicion that the circumstances of their recovery involved a failure to follow the appropriate legal procedures.

f. Any exceptions to the above clauses 9a, 9b, 9c, or 9e will only be because the museum is either:

acting as an externally approved repository of last resort for material of local (UK) origin; or

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acquiring an item of minor importance that lacks secure ownership history but in the best judgement of experts in the field concerned has not been illicitly traded; or

acting with the permission of authorities with the requisite jurisdiction in the country of origin; or

in possession of reliable documentary evidence that the item was exported from its country of origin before 1970.

In these cases the museum will be open and transparent in the way it makes decisions and will act only with the express consent of an appropriate outside authority.

g. The museum does not hold or intend to acquire any human remains.

10. Spoliation

The museum will use the statement of principles ‘Spoliation of Works of Art during the Nazi, Holocaust and World War II period’, issued for non-national museums in 1999 by the Museums and Galleries Commission.

11. The Repatriation and Restitution of objects and human remains

The museum’s governing body, acting on the advice of the museum’s professional staff, if any, may take a decision to return human remains (unless covered by the “Guidance for the care of human remains in museums” issued by DCMS in 2005) , objects or specimens to a country or people of origin. The museum will take such decisions on a case by case basis; within its legal position and taking into account all ethical implications and available guidance. This will mean that the procedures described in 13a-13d, 13g and 13o/s below will be followed but the remaining procedures are not appropriate.

The disposal of human remains from museums in England, Northern Ireland and Wales will follow the procedures in the “Guidance for the care of human remains in museums”.

12. Management of archives

As the museum holds archives, including photographs and printed ephemera, its governing body will be guided by the Code of Practice on Archives for Museums and Galleries in the United Kingdom (3rd ed., 2002).

13. Disposal procedures

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Disposal preliminaries

a. The governing body will ensure that the disposal process is carried out openly and with transparency.

b. By definition, the museum has a long-term purpose and holds collections in trust for society in relation to its stated objectives. The governing body therefore accepts the principle that sound curatorial reasons for disposal must be established before consideration is given to the disposal of any items in the museum's collection.

c. The museum will confirm that it is legally free to dispose of an item and agreements on disposal made with donors will be taken into account.

d. When disposal of a museum object is being considered, the museum will establish if it was acquired with the aid of an external funding organisation. In such cases, any conditions attached to the original grant will be followed. This may include repayment of the original grant and a proportion of the proceeds if the item is disposed of by sale.

Motivation for disposal and method of disposal

e. When disposal is motivated by curatorial reasons the procedures outlined in paragraphs 13g-13s will be followed and the method of disposal may be by gift, sale or exchange.

f. The museum will not undertake disposal motivated principally by financial reasons

The disposal decision-making process

g. Whether the disposal is motivated either by curatorial or financial reasons, the decision to dispose of material from the collections will be taken by the governing body only after full consideration of the reasons for disposal. Other factors including the public benefit, the implications for the museum's collections and collections held by museums and other organisations collecting the same material or in related fields will be considered. External expert advice will be obtained and the views of stakeholders such as donors, researchers, local and source communities and others served by the museum will also be sought.

Responsibility for disposal decision-making

h. A decision to dispose of a specimen or object, whether by gift, exchange, sale or destruction (in the case of an item too badly damaged or deteriorated to be of any use for the purposes of the collections or for reasons of health and safety), will be the responsibility of the governing body of the museum acting on the advice of professional curatorial staff, if any, and not of the curator of the collection acting alone.

Use of proceeds of sale

i. Any monies received by the museum governing body from the disposal of items will be applied for the benefit of the collections. This normally means the purchase of

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further acquisitions. In exceptional cases, improvements relating to the care of collections in order to meet or exceed Accreditation requirements relating to the risk of damage to and deterioration of the collections may be justifiable. Any monies received in compensation for the damage, loss or destruction of items will be applied in the same way. Advice on those cases where the monies are intended to be used for the care of collections will be sought from MLA.

j. The proceeds of a sale will be ring-fenced so it can be demonstrated that they are spent in a manner compatible with the requirements of the Accreditation standard.

Disposal by gift or sale

k. Once a decision to dispose of material in the collection has been taken, priority will be given to retaining it within the public domain, unless it is to be destroyed. It will therefore be offered in the first instance, by gift or sale, directly to other Accredited Museums likely to be interested in its acquisition.

l. If the material is not acquired by any Accredited Museums to which it was offered directly as a gift or for sale, then the museum community at large will be advised of the intention to dispose of the material, normally through an announcement in the Museums Association's Museums Journal, and in other specialist journals where appropriate.

m. The announcement relating to gift or sale will indicate the number and nature of specimens or objects involved, and the basis on which the material will be transferred to another institution. Preference will be given to expressions of interest from other Accredited Museums. A period of at least two months will be allowed for an interest in acquiring the material to be expressed. At the end of this period, if no expressions of interest have been received, the museum may consider disposing of the material to other interested individuals and organisations giving priority to organisations in the public domain.

Disposal by exchange

n. The nature of disposal by exchange means that the museum will not necessarily be in a position to exchange the material with another Accredited museum. The governing body will therefore ensure that issues relating to accountability and impartiality are carefully considered to avoid undue influence on its decision-making process.

o. In cases where the governing body wishes for sound curatorial reasons to exchange material directly with Accredited or unaccredited museums, with other organisations or with individuals, the procedures in paragraphs 13a-13d and 13g-13h will be followed as will the procedures in paragraphs 13p-13s.

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p. If the exchange is proposed to be made with a specific Accredited museum, other Accredited museums which collect in the same or related areas will be directly notified of the proposal and their comments will be requested.

q. If the exchange is proposed with a non-accredited museum, with another type of organisation or with an individual, the museum will make an announcement in the Museums Journal and in other specialist journals where appropriate.

r. Both the notification and announcement must provide information on the number and nature of the specimens or objects involved both in the museum's collection and those intended to be acquired in exchange. A period of at least two months must be allowed for comments to be received. At the end of this period, the governing body must consider the comments before a final decision on the exchange is made.

Documenting disposal

s. Full records will be kept of all decisions on disposals and the items involved and proper arrangements made for the preservation and/or transfer, as appropriate, of the documentation relating to the items concerned, including photographic records where practicable in accordance with SPECTRUM Procedure on deaccession and disposal.