

## COLLECTIONS DEVELOPMENT POLICY

### 1. Museum's statement of purpose

The Charles Dickens Museum is located at 48 Doughty Street, London WC1, the last remaining London family home of Charles Dickens (1812-70). Dickens lived in the house from 1837-9, during which time he completed *The Pickwick Papers* and wrote the novels *Oliver Twist* and *Nicholas Nickleby*. The building, which is Grade 1 listed, was purchased by the Dickens Fellowship along with neighbouring 49 Doughty Street in 1922, and it opened as a museum in 1925. The property and collections are of singular significance to the nation in preserving our literary heritage.

The charitable object of the Museum is to promote, encourage, maintain, improve and advance education of the public in the life and works of Charles Dickens and to establish and maintain the property at 48 Doughty Street in the London Borough of Camden as a Museum to house and preserve all articles having connection with Charles Dickens.

The Museum's collections of object, archive and library material are considered to be the world's most comprehensive repository of material related to the life and works of Charles Dickens. Collections development is conducted at the Museum in accordance with its mission: 'to establish the Charles Dickens Museum as the world's leading centre for the study, appreciation and enjoyment of Charles Dickens's life and works.'

The purpose of this Collections Development Policy is to serve as a guide for staff, Trustees and other stakeholders, and the public, concerning the professional standards the Museum will apply to the objects in its care. The Policy seeks to reassure the public that the Museum is operating within an ethical framework and is publicly accountable.

### 2. An overview of current collections

The Charles Dickens Museum collections have been accessible to the public since 1925; they continue to grow through donations and strategic purchases. Highlights include furniture owned by Dickens such as his desk and chair from Gad's Hill; portions of the *Nicholas Nickleby*, *The Pickwick Papers* and *Oliver Twist* manuscripts; letters written by Dickens to other prominent Victorians; and portrayals of the author and his family by artists including Samuel Lawrence, WP Frith, JE Millais, Robert W Buss and Daniel Maclise.

The collections have developed through significant donations, beginning with the National Dickens Library formed by FG Kitton and transferred to the Museum in 1925 from its previous home at the Guildhall Library. Subsequent bequests and donations from major Dickens collectors such as The Comte De Suzannet, BW Matz, William Carlton, Sydney Henry, TW Hill, Leslie Staples and Howard Duffield further enriched the Museum's holdings and displays. In the latter half of the twentieth century the Museum also received the research archives of scholars John Butt,

Kathleen Tillotson, K J Fielding, Thomas Wright and Philip Collins amongst others. It is the quality and significance of these generous donations which has earned the Museum its reputation as a repository of great depth and breadth – from autographed letters and presentation copies, to Toby jugs and musical scores.

The Museum's holdings are arranged into four categories: (i) library, (ii) object, (iii) archive and manuscript, and (iv) picture library collections. All contain material relating to the life and works of Dickens and include the following:

- Printed material written by or about Dickens
- Printed material about his work, his life, his family, his circle and his times
- Manuscript material written by or about Dickens, and about his family and circle, by contemporaries or by Dickens scholars and students
- Objects once possessed by Dickens, his family or his circle
- Paintings, prints and photographs of Dickens, his family and circle, or of objects, buildings and places associated with them
- Material that celebrates or commemorates Dickens, including the archives of Dickens interest groups such as the Dickens Fellowship
- Material related to people and places associated with Dickens's writings
- Material related to the literary and cultural legacy of Dickens such as adaptations, translations and music.

The Museum also holds a separate Support Collection which complements the core collection. It is comprised of furniture and decorative items suitable for 1830s interior reconstructions, and other objects and library items which are suitable for handling and school group visits.

### **3. Themes and priorities for future collecting**

The Museum endeavours to collect objects relating to the life and works of Charles Dickens. These include items about or belonging to Dickens, his immediate family and friends as well as material linked to his cultural and literacy legacy.

The general timeframe of the collection begins with the lives of his parents (ca.1785) and continues beyond his death in 1870 to include material which demonstrates his appeal through the nineteenth and into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Because of Dickens's global impact, no limitation is placed on the geographical area to which collecting relates.

The Museum prioritises acquiring material relating to 'the Doughty Street years' (1837-1839) and the publications Dickens wrote in this period (*The Pickwick Papers*, *Oliver Twist* and *Nicholas Nickleby*). Material related to other members of the Dickens family who lived in this house – Catherine, Charley, Mamie and Katey Dickens – is also a priority.

The Museum sees contemporary collecting as an important part of its role in documenting the relevance of Dickens in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. An example of this is a digital archive acquired in 2012 about events around the globe held to mark the bicentenary of Dickens's birth.

The Museum recognises the importance of its library for Dickens scholars, and therefore ensures it is up-to-date with the most recent publications; it will try to close up any gaps in periodicals or serials that it holds.

The Museum positions itself as a fitting repository for Dickens-related research archives and seeks to build its capacity in order to receive more.

#### **4. Themes and priorities for rationalisation and disposal**

The Charles Dickens Museum is committed to responsible, curatorially-motivated disposal and sees this as vital to increasing public benefit derived from the Museum's collections.

Rationalisation and disposal at the Museum will focus on the following areas:

- Duplication in the library collection
- Weeding and rationalisation of the manuscript and archive collection
- Objects with no relevance to Dickens or to the time period of the house.

#### **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 collections arrangements.

The Museum will not collect:

Objects and archive material relating to other Victorian writers unless specifically relevant to the life and work of Charles Dickens.

Objects, images and archive material relating to Victorian London unless specifically relevant to the life and work of Charles Dickens.

Objects, images and archive material relating to the local area of Bloomsbury unless specifically relevant to the life and work of Charles Dickens.

#### **6. 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 specialism in order to avoid unnecessary duplication and waste of resources.

Specific reference is made to the following museums:

- The Victoria and Albert Museum
- The Museum of London
- The National Portrait Gallery

- The British Library
- The Dickens House Museum, Broadstairs, Kent
- The Dickens Birthplace Museum, Portsmouth, Hampshire
- The Foundling Museum, Bloomsbury

## **7. Policy review procedure**

The Collections Development Policy will be published and reviewed from time to time, but at least once every five years. The date when the policy is next due for review is noted above. 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. The Museum will not acquire any biological or geological material. Though the Museum holds in its collection several samples of hair from Charles Dickens and his daughter, it does not intend to seek out actively any other human remains related to Dickens or his ancestors.

- 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. In England, Wales and Northern Ireland the procedures include reporting finds to the landowner or occupier of the land and to the proper authorities in the case of possible treasure as defined by the Treasure Act 1996.
- f. Any exceptions to the above clauses 9a, 9b, 9c, or 9e will only be because the Museum is:
- acting as an externally approved repository of last resort for material of local (UK) origin
  - 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
  - acting with the permission of authorities with the requisite jurisdiction in the country of origin
  - 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 currently 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**

In the event of the Museum acquiring human remains in the future, the Museum’s governing body, acting on the advice of the Museum’s professional staff, 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 (third edition, 2002).

### **13. Disposal procedures**

#### *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. In exceptional cases, the disposal may be motivated principally by financial reasons. The method of disposal will therefore be by sale and the procedures outlined below in paragraphs 13g-13m and 13o/s will be followed. In cases where disposal is motivated by financial reasons, the governing body will not undertake disposal unless it can be demonstrated that all the following exceptional circumstances are met in full:
  - the disposal will significantly improve the long-term public benefit derived from the remaining collections
  - the disposal will not be undertaken to generate short-term revenue (for example to meet a budget deficit)
  - the disposal will be undertaken as a last resort after other sources of funding have been thoroughly explored

#### *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 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 the Arts Council England.
- 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 collections 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, archives or libraries 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.
- 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*

- o/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.

This policy was approved by Board of Trustees on 28<sup>th</sup> May 2015  
It replaces the previous Acquisition and Disposal Policy of the Museum.  
This policy will be reviewed May 2018