

BRENT MUSEUM AND BRENT ARCHIVES JOINT ACQUISITION AND DISPOSAL POLICY

VESRION 3.0

1. Purpose and Role

Brent Museum and Brent Archives represent the Heritage Services for the London Borough of Brent. Through their collections they aim to represent all the communities in the borough. The implementation of an up-to-date, clear and structured Collecting Policy is important so that Brent Museum and Brent Archives continue to provide a high quality service, and also ensure that collections are representative of the borough as a whole.

This section provides an overview of the existing collections at the time of revising this policy (2010):

The Museum Collection

The museum's collections reflect working and domestic life in the London Borough of Brent from about 1850 to the present day. The collection broadly comprises artefacts, video and oral history recordings and extends to some 10,000 items.

The Barham Collection

This is an antiquarian collection ranging from classical antiquities to ceramics and furniture of the 17th to 19th centuries. It comprises over 500 pieces, bequeathed to the Borough in 1937 by Joseph Barham, local businessman, collector and philanthropist.

The Wembley History Society Collection

A collection relating to the Wembley area, collected by members of the WHS (established 1952). The collection includes archaeological finds, domestic items, British Empire Exhibition artefacts, books, photographs, slides and ephemera, and is split across the museum and archive collections.

Borough Archive Collection

Records of Brent Council and its predecessor bodies, as well as records of local businesses and organisations, parish records, personal and family papers, newspapers, photographs and negatives, prints and drawings, maps and printed ephemera.

The Local History Library Collection

This collection includes books, pamphlets, microfilm copies of local newspaper collections, newspapers, maps, and census data.

Education Handling Collection

This comprises of some 700 objects that have been acquired specifically for educational purposes, such as handling or school group sessions, but not school loans. Managed by the Learning Officer, these objects are appropriately stored and handled to ensure they have a reasonable lifetime within the context of their educational role. This material is recorded separately outside the accession register and treated as unaccessioned material. The education collections have important potential for collections study by non-school groups, such as adult learners.

2. Criteria for collecting

The Museum and Archives will collect material by donation, purchase, bequest or transfer from another museum, archive or collection as appropriate.

Material will be assigned to the collection of either the Museum or the Archives. The assignment of any material which falls within the remit of both services will be agreed by the Curator and Archivist. In general Brent Museum will collect objects relating to the history of Brent and its people, and Brent Archives will collect archival records (largely comprising of manuscript or typescript documents on paper or parchment or paper but including printed and duplicated items, maps, photographs, slides etc). The Archives will also collect digital video and audio recordings, as well as digital images, the content of which relates to one of the categories below.

Broadly speaking, Brent Museum and Brent Archive will accept items offered for donation which fall into the following categories:

- Material with an association with the London Borough of Brent or with earlier boroughs which correspond to the geographical area of Brent (i.e. Boroughs of Willesden, Wembley and Kingsbury).
- Material associated with people who have moved to or lived in the borough.
- Material identified as representative of any one of Brent's BME communities.
- Material from any period of the history of the area which now constitutes the London Borough of Brent. This can include archaeological and geological collections which meet the conditions above.
- Records of Brent Council, for which Brent Archives is the designated repository.

2 b Collecting contemporary material

Black and minority ethnic (BME) groups in Brent make up the majority of the population at 54.7%, according to GLA projections (2001 census), and Brent Council's commitment to improving services for specific BME groups is outlined in the Local Area Agreement and Cultural and Community strategies. It is important that Brent Museum and Brent Archives collections represent all the communities in the borough, allowing all residents to feel that the museum and archives are relevant to them.

Contemporary collecting in museums and archives is about collecting material that represents the society, community and culture of the time so that it can be preserved and valued in the future. Traditionally museums have focussed on collecting items that are "old", "rare" or "valuable" and they have shied away from collecting the here-and-now.

Brent Museum and Brent Archives therefore understand contemporary collecting as

*"collecting material representing Brent's society, community and culture so that it can be preserved and valued in the future. As well as physical, 3D objects the definition of Contemporary Collecting has been widened to include oral history as well photographic collections relating to Brent from the 1970s to the present day."*¹.

¹ For further details about the contemporary collecting process please see Brent Museum's Contemporary Collecting

A statistical analysis of recent donations and of the overall collections has been carried out by Brent Museum. This identified that certain groups are under-represented in the museum and archive collections. Brent Museum and Brent Archives will therefore take part in high-profile initiatives to encourage people from ethnic minorities to donate items to the collections. Collecting work will particularly focus on the following groups and communities:

- South Asian (particularly Archival material)
- African and particularly Somali
- African-Caribbean
- East and Central European (particularly Polish and Kosovo Albanian)
- Brazilian
- Young People (14-25 year olds)

The Archives will undertake surveys of record-keeping practice in local community groups and associations and make targeted direct approaches appealing for the ongoing donation of their records. The Museum and Archives will also work with schools, colleges and community organisations to develop collecting projects.

Exceptions to the conditions above will be assessed individually by the Curator and/or Archivist and will usually only relate to material which is in danger of otherwise being destroyed.

The Curator and/or Archivist will approve all acquisitions.

3. Limitations on collecting

Brent Museum and Brent Archives will ensure that care of their collections, documentation and listing procedures and the use of collections will meet the requirements of the Accreditation and TNA Standards. They will take into account limitations on collecting imposed by such factors as lack of staff capacity, constraints on storage, preservation and collection care arrangements and cost of remedial conservation.

The museum's management, acting on the advice of the museum's professional staff, may take a decision to return human remains, 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.

Brent Museum and Brent Archives will under normal circumstances not collect/accept material:

- offered by persons who have no legal right to donate, deposit or sell it.²
- where conditions are attached to the donation relating to use, display or collections management.

Strategy document, produced by J. Carr as part of "Reassessing What We Collect" project 2009.

² In accordance with the provisions of the UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property (1970), and the Dealing in Cultural Objects (Offences) Act 2003, the Museum and Archives 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 DCMS in 2005. The museum will also 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.

- which shows evidence of pest infestation which could potentially spread to the rest of the collection.
- which cannot be accommodated in the storage space available.
- which is in an obsolete format that is not accessible without the use of specialised equipment, such as VHS or audio tape.
- on a loan basis. The only exception is short-term loans for temporary exhibitions.
- which duplicate existing items in the collections.
- human remains.
- Church of England parish records for which the recognised diocesan record office under the terms of the parochial Register and Records Measure 1978 is the London Metropolitan Archive.
- public records, including those relating to the former Middlesex County Council, for which the designated place of deposit is the London Metropolitan Archives

4. Collecting policies of other museums and archives

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, such as in neighbouring boroughs. 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.

5. Commitment to collected items

Brent Museum and Brent Archives collect and preserve items in perpetuity to allow their use by future generations. No item will be guaranteed a place in Brent Museum's permanent display. However, relevant objects will be used in temporary exhibitions. The length of time an object is displayed will take into account the conservation needs of that object. This means that archival material is likely to be displayed for less time and in more carefully controlled conditions than more robust social history objects.

Some donations may be used as part of the Heritage Services education collection. This will only take place where the donor has agreed to the object being used in this way and fully understands the potential consequences of this type of use. Newly donated objects which are accepted for transfer into the Education Collection will not be accessioned as part of the core collection. Objects from the existing core collection will only be transferred for use in the education collection in the event that the following criteria are satisfied:

- The item is a duplication and/or the Curator is satisfied that any potential damage to the object will not be to the detriment of the range and depth of the collection.
- Permission for use of the object in this way has been specifically granted by the donor, or at the very least, all efforts have been made to contact the original donor to request his/her permission for this transfer to take place.
- The original donor has not indicated at any point that he/she does not approve the transfer.
- The item is de-accessioned from the main museum collection before transfer to the education collection.

Brent Museum and Brent Archives are committed to working towards meeting national standards for storage and environmental conditions. Further information regarding

documentation and collections care can be found in Brent Museums Documentation and Collection Care Plans.

6. Disposal procedures

By definition, Brent Museum and Brent Archives have a long-term purpose and aim to preserve the collections in perpetuity. However, on occasion collections will be reviewed in line with the collecting policy. Items which are damaged beyond repair will also be considered for disposal in line with the 1999 MA Ethical Guidelines.

Where the Museum or Archives are legally free to dispose of an item, the decision to do so, whether by exchange, sale, gift or destruction (in the case of items too badly damaged or deteriorated to be of any use), will be taken by Heritage Service Management in consultation with advisory bodies, and not by the Curator or Archivist acting alone. The Archives will aim to maintain the archival integrity of collections, but where it is considered appropriate may split collections (with the permission of depositors) and transfer material to another recognised archive.

Full records will be kept of all decisions 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. Decisions to dispose of items will not be made with the principle aim of generating funds. Once a decision to dispose of an item has been taken, it will be offered first, by exchange, gift or sale, to registered museums or a relevant archive service before disposal to other interested individuals or organisations is considered.

In cases in which an arrangement is not being made with an individual registered museum or archive, the museum and archive community at large will be advised of the intention to dispose of material. This will normally be through an announcement in the appropriate professional journal. A period of at least two months will be allowed for an interest in acquiring the material to be expressed. Any monies received by Heritage Services from the disposal of items will be applied for the benefit of the collections. This normally means the purchase of further acquisitions but in exceptional cases can also relate to improvements relating to the care of collections.

6. Policy review procedure

This has been approved by the Head of Libraries, Arts and Heritage on behalf of the London Borough of Brent and will be made publicly available. The date when the policy is next due for review is noted below. MLA London and TNA will be notified of any changes to the Acquisition and Disposal Policy, and the implications of any such changes for the future of existing collections.

Brent Museum and Brent Archives

Governing Body: London Borough of Brent

Date approved by governing body:

Date at which policy due for review: 2013