

## Information Sheet for Participants

**Researcher:** Kathleen Lawther

**Project Title:** Backlog: The history and practice of collections documentation and museums' contribution to the digital cultural record

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You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve.

### Who is doing the research?

Kathleen Lawther is an experienced museum professional and PhD researcher based at the School of Museum Studies and Institute for Digital Culture at the University of Leicester. The project is supported by the Collections Trust and supervised by Professor Ross Parry.

### What is the aim of the research?

Having worked in museum collections documentation for over ten years, Kathleen has a keen understanding of the challenges that museums face in maintaining accurate and meaningful records of their collections and their significance. At the same time digital advances promise to make collections more accessible and relevant for audiences. The research project seeks to understand the realities of documentation practice and what this means for digital collections.

The central research question asks:

- How has the history and practice of collections documentation impacted upon the representation of museum collections in the digital cultural record?

The secondary research questions are:

- Where are the gaps in collections documentation, what patterns emerge and what can these patterns tell us about the causes of these gaps?
- What has documentation practice looked like on the ground in response to advances in computerisation and the introduction of the registration/accreditation scheme?
- Who has been responsible for this work?
- How has this affected museums' contribution to the digital cultural record?



### **Why have I been invited to participate in this survey?**

This survey is open to people working with collections information in UK museums.

You have been chosen to participate because you are an adult (over 18 years of age) and work with collections information in UK museums. This research welcomes responses from individuals working in all types of museums and is particularly interested in responses from people working in Accredited Local Authority (and former Local Authority) museum services in England.

### **Your role in completing the survey**

This survey aims to record museum workers' perspectives on the proportions of collections that are documented and/or digitized, the nature of documentation backlogs, and who works on documentation in museums.

This survey is not intended to be an empirical audit of collections documentation in museums. I recognize that responses entered into this questionnaire are likely to be the estimates based on the working experience of an individual. Responses will not be used to draw conclusions about the extent or quality of collections documentation within an institution or across the museum sector as a whole.

### **How the survey relates to the wider research project**

This research project will employ a mixed methodology:

- An online survey
- Research in case study institutions
- Focus group(s)

This survey complements the case study research, which will focus on Local Authority (and former Local Authority) museum services in England.

The focus group(s) will explore in more depth the themes that have emerged from the earlier stages of the project.

At the end of the survey, you will have an opportunity to express interest in participating in the case studies and/or focus group. This is entirely optional.

### **Your rights**

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the project at any time before 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025 without having to give a reason.

If you are uncertain or uncomfortable about any aspect of your participation, please contact the researcher listed at the top of this letter to discuss your concerns or request clarification on any aspect of the study.



**Protecting your confidentiality**

Your name will be anonymized in any presentation of your responses. Presentation of your responses may include your job title if you choose to share it, except for unique job titles that may be used to identify you. Identifiable job titles and any other details you provide that might be used to identify people, places or situations will be suitably modified to protect your and others' identities.

For more information, please see the Privacy Notice for this survey.

If you have any questions about the ethical conduct of the research please contact the Research Ethics Officer, Dr David Unwin, on [dmu1@le.ac.uk](mailto:dmu1@le.ac.uk). The contact of the main Ethics College Committee is [ethics@leicester.ac.uk](mailto:ethics@leicester.ac.uk)

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K Lawther'.

Kathleen Lawther