

Security in museums and galleries: the museum security toolkit

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Introduction

The Museum Security Toolkit is an integrated approach to museum security, which supports museums to maintain and improve the security of their *collections against theft, fire and flood*. The toolkit has been developed for museums and other heritage facilities as a result of a Collections Trust project, Building Capacity for Museum Security, funded by Arts Council England. The Collections Trust worked with museum practitioners, colleagues at Arts Council England and the Association of Crime Prevention Officers to develop a rationale for museum security auditing which would build on the considerable body of security experience already in the museum sector, and learn from the knowledge and techniques developed in Neighbourhood Policing.

The Museum Security Toolkit is supported by further security resources at <http://www.collectionslink.org.uk/security>

Throughout this toolkit, the term 'staff' is used to denote governing body, paid staff and volunteers.

The Security Principles

This toolkit has been developed with the following principles in mind:

- museum security doesn't happen in a vacuum, it should be embedded in a museum's mission, policies, procedures, activities and planning
- museum security is the responsibility of everyone in the museum, from governing body, through to staff and volunteers
- security is about balancing appropriate access to collections with the likelihood of threats occurring
- a risk management approach allows the planning of security solutions in response to risk assessment and individual circumstances and context
- to plan effectively against security threats a museum needs to 'know' its collections - what they are, what they are made from, and their historic and financial values
- communication is important - to maintain the profile of security within your museum, and to learn from colleagues in other museums, and the wider community, about current threats and solutions
- expert advice is critical, however it does not replace the need for museums to maintain an awareness of threats and solutions, and ensure that they build and maintain a detailed knowledge of their own security provision
- it is important for museums to maintain visible security profile - if museums are proactive and serious about security they will be considered to be a less attractive target by potential thieves

This toolkit points you to some basic tools and resources which will support you to embed these Security Principles into the operation of your museum.

Security and the Museum Accreditation Scheme

This toolkit gives you an opportunity to consider security activities and ways of working which will support you to fulfil some Accreditation requirements. It will support you to:

- improve your museum's security against theft, fire and flood
- integrate the security of collections into the policy of your museum
- ensure that, at an operational level, security is supported in the daily practice of your museum
- embed responsibility for security across all staff in your museum, and integrate security awareness into the development of your staff

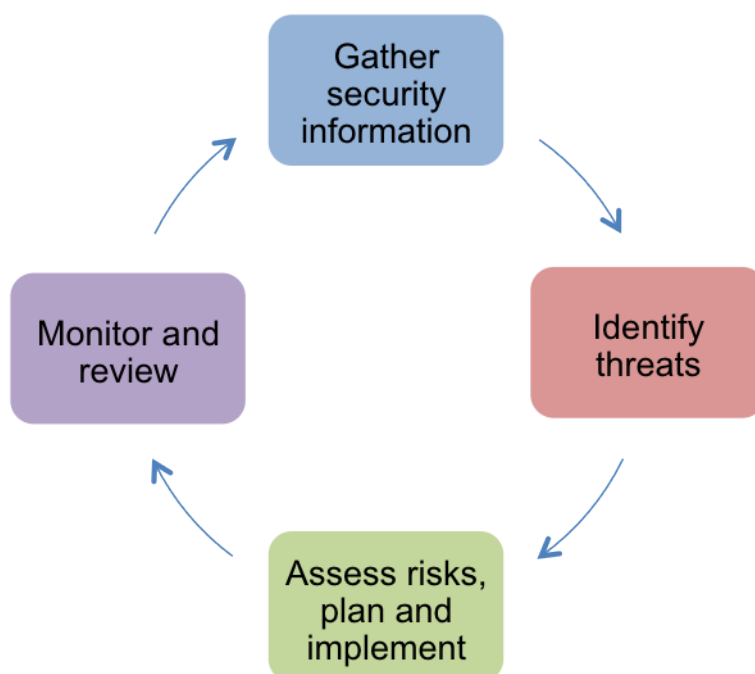
- develop internal expertise before seeking external review
- enable you to take a risk management approach to the security solutions you choose, which will help you to prioritise and forward plan

Four Steps to a Risk Managed Approach

Keeping your collections secure is an integral part of the day to day management of your museum. This toolkit sets out four steps to a risk management approach to museum security.

- **Step 1** - Gather information about the security measures in your museum
- **Step 2** - Identify threats to your collections, and to the on-going operation of your museum should the threats occur
- **Step 3** - Assess the risks of the identified threats occurring, plan to manage the risks through current or improved control measures, and implement your plans
- **Step 4** - Monitor and review your control measures

In practice, these 'steps' are part of an on-going and continuous cycle of information gathering, assessment, planning, implementation and review.



Step 1: Gather information about the security measures in your museum

Before you can plan any improvements to the measures you currently use to protect your collections, you need to have a clear understanding of your current situation regarding security from theft, fire and flood. Achieving this understanding is an on-going process, which involves input from staff across the entire museum: it will be informed by your Collections Care Policy and probably an existing Security or Buildings Security Policy.

To find out more about gathering information about the security of your collection, see:

- ◇ **The Environmental Visual Assessment (EVA)** - <http://www.collectionslink.org.uk/all-security-resources/1783-the-environmental-visual-assessment-eva> is a practical guide to using a security assessment technique with all of your staff, to gather different perspectives on security risks and make your museum more security aware
- ◇ **Security in museums and galleries: the Security Audit** - <http://www.collectionslink.org.uk/all-security-resources/1712-the-security-audit-checklist> is a guide to auditing your physical and procedural measures to protect your collections. It contains a security checklist of questions which prompt you to check and record the findings from your audit.

Step 2: Identify threats to your collections, and to the on-going operation of your museum should the threats occur

Protecting your collections from the threats of fire, theft and flood requires an up to date knowledge and understanding of:

- your collections
- current threats to your collections

Knowing your collections

Maintaining a good Collections Management System (CMS) will support you to understand the objects in your collection, the materials they are made from, which objects may be of interest to thieves, or at risk from fire and flood. You need to hold *basic inventory level* information about the objects, or groups of objects, currently in your care, including objects which belong to your museum, objects on loan to you, and objects left by members of the public for identification. If you have this information to hand you can then prioritise which objects may be currently at risk and need for improved protection.

Inventory level information will include:

- object number
- object name
- object brief description
- object location
- object ownership
- object composition

Ideally, for at risk objects, or objects of high financial value, you will also hold:

- in depth object description
- detailed provenance
- good quality photographs

Each object needs to be labelled and/or marked with its object number so that it is linked to the information in your CMS.

If you are an Accredited Museum you will have all of the above in place, or a plan to put it in place.

To find out more about knowing your collections:

- ◇ The ***SPECTRUM Primary Procedures*** form the basis of a good collections management system. There are fact sheets covering each of the *8 Primary Procedures* - <http://www.collectionslink.org.uk/spectrum-resources/1222-spectrum-advice-factsheets>
- ◇ The fact sheet called ***Retrospective Documentation and Making an Inventory*** - http://www.collectionslink.org.uk/media/com_form2content/documents/c1/a210/f6/RetrospectiveFactsheet.pdf describes in detail the inventory level information you should hold, and how to create it if it is not in place.

Understanding current threats to your collections

Threats to your collection will change over time, and will be influenced by factors such as the location of objects, and current values of objects. Using EVAs and Security Audits will have already prompted you to identify situations where objects are at risk from theft, fire and flood.

In the case of the threat of theft, you need to maintain an awareness of the kinds of objects which are currently at risk. Use colleagues, contacts, networks and the media to build and maintain an awareness of current threats to collections in the UK.

To find out more about understanding threats to your collections:

- ◇ **Security in museums and galleries: threats to museum collections** on Collections Link - <http://www.collectionslink.org.uk/all-security-resources/1710-why-objects-are-at-risk> illustrates some types of objects which might at risk from theft
- ◇ The **Sharing Information about Security** page on Collections Link <http://www.collectionslink.org.uk/discover/security/1598> contains a list of security information networks which you can join
- ◇ The **Advice about Security** page on Collections Link - <http://www.collectionslink.org.uk/discover/security/1597> describes the role that expert advice should play in your security planning, and where to seek advice
- ◇ The **Security Case Studies** pages on Collections Link - <http://www.collectionslink.org.uk/all-security-case-studies> contains examples of actual damage and loss to UK museum collections from theft, fire and flood, and includes some lessons learned

Step 3: Assess the risks of the identified threats occurring, plan to manage the risks through current or improved control measures, and implement your plans

As you assess your current security provision, and build knowledge about your collections, and any possible threats to them, you will find yourself in a better position to assess the risks of threats occurring.

A **threat** can be defined as:

- ‘a hazard, such as theft, fire and flood, which may occur’

A **risk** can be defined as:

- ‘the likelihood that a given threat will occur, which will cause harm to the collections, and the operation and reputation of the museum’

Managing security risks to the collections is part of a wider risk management strategy within an organisation: security risks will need to be managed alongside other types of risk, such as health and safety risks to staff and visitors, or environmental risks to collections.

- ◇ The ***Framing security decisions in the context of your museum’s mission and policies*** page on Collections Link - <http://www.collectionslink.org.uk/discover/security/1591> illustrates how security of collections fits into your wider Collections Management Framework

In the case of collections security, risk management will be informed by all of the knowledge that you have brought together in Steps 1 and 2 of this toolkit, including:

- The results of EVAs and Security Audits
- Knowledge about the objects in the collection
- Knowledge about threats to the collection

Responsibility for evaluating the information from these steps, assessing the risk of threats occurring and planning to mitigate those risks, will lie at a high level within a museum, and will rest ultimately with the governing body. It is common at this level to manage risks using a Risk Register. A register will take different forms, and will depend on the circumstances of the individual museum.

Here is an example of a fictitious **Risk Register**, with an entry concerning the risk of theft of rhino horn from a museum. The museum has carried through Steps 1 and 2 of the toolkit and is now aware of the increased value of rhino horn on the black market, and also that their specimen is on display in a low specification case.

Risk Reference Number	Date of Register Entry	Description of Risk	Impact <small>(a score between 1-3, corresponding to Low, Medium and High)</small>	Likelihood <small>(a score between 1-3 corresponding to Low, Medium and High)</small>	Control <small>measures taken to mitigate the risk, with timings and cost indication)</small>	Residual risk/date <small>(a score between 1-3 highlighting the extent to which the control has mitigated the risk)</small>	Previous/movement <small>(an indication of whether the risk profile has got better, worse or stayed more or less the same)</small>
1	31 March 2013	<i>Risk of theft of rhino horn on display. Risk has increased recently with high price of rhino horn, and increased number of thefts from museums</i>	<i>Impact level 3 - there is high risk of negative press publicity which would impact badly on the museum's reputation</i>	<i>Likelihood level 3 – the object is in low spec case near museum entrance, which is not invigilated</i>	<i>Remove from display 1 April 2013, investigate surrogate for display</i>	<i>1 April 2013: object removed from display. Residual Risk Score 1.</i>	<i>Risk has now moved to possible theft from the stores, which were considered secure at the last Security Audit.</i>

To find out more about Risk Management:

- ◇ **Assess and Manage Risk in Collections Care**, published by SHARE - <http://www.collectionslink.org.uk/discover/site-information/1421-share-museums-east-how-to-guide-to-assess-and-manage-risk-in-collections-care> is a short free guide which explores the process of risk management
- ◇ **Insuring Museum Collections**, published by SHARE - <http://www.collectionslink.org.uk/discover/site-information/1423-share-museums-east-how-to-guide-to-insuring-museum-collections> is a short guide which explores the management of risk through insurance
- ◇ **RAPT** (Risk Awareness Profiling Tool) - <http://www.raptonline.org.uk/welcome.asp> helps you to assess the level of risk awareness across your whole organisation. It provides you with a profile that indicates areas where awareness in the organisation is good, and areas where improvement is needed. Although RAPT is more wide ranging than just security of collections, if you are using RAPT, or if you think RAPT might be useful to you, the results of a Security Audit will provide information for your RAPT assessment. You can sign up for RAPT, and create a demonstration assessment, which is a good introduction to the subject of risk

Planning control measures to protect collections against risk

The decisions you make about improving control measures will be carried forward in your museum's Forward Plan.

- ◇ There is guidance on Forward Planning in the **South West Federation Forward Planning Toolkit** - <http://www.collectionslink.org.uk/programmes/museum-accreditation/1018-swfed-forward-planning-toolkit>
- ◇ **Accreditation Guidance Sheet 3: Collection Management Planning and Procedures** - <http://www.collectionslink.org.uk/programmes/museum-accreditation/1078-collections-management-planning-and-procedures-guidance-sheet-3> gives an overview of the role of planning and procedures with links to the Accreditation Standard
- ◇ For specifying physical control measures, the following sections on Collections Link will be helpful:
 - Security Specifications - <http://www.collectionslink.org.uk/security-specifications>
 - Security and Buildings - <http://www.collectionslink.org.uk/security-and-buildings>
 - Security and Collections - <http://www.collectionslink.org.uk/security-and-collections>

- ◇ **Presentations made at Collections Trust Security Seminars 2012/2013** - <http://www.collectionslink.org.uk/security-case-studies/1635> provides some examples of how museums have made planned improvements to their security.

You will also have to plan for the times when a threat becomes a reality, and an emergency occurs. If you are an Accredited Museum you will already have an Emergency Plan.

- ◇ Find out more about Emergency Planning in ***Be prepared: Emergency Planning Toolkit*** - http://www.sharemuseumseast.org.uk/shares/resource_116.pdf

Step 4: Monitor and review your control measures

You will need to continually review threats and control measures, as part of your museum's management and planning cycles.

Monitoring and reviewing your performance will help you to improve, and will ensure that issues of security remain at the heart of your collections management practice.

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