



# **Resources for Curators of Numismatic Collections**

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## **Introduction**

Money has been used, in various forms, for millennia and tells us invaluable information about our past; almost everyone has a daily experience with money. This means that your numismatic collection can contribute to all kinds of exhibits: cultural, historical or financial displays as well as in specific money galleries or museums. Money draws visitors in with personal stories, showing how something they use every day has changed throughout history.

However, various challenges are also associated with these objects. They tend to be small and, because of their use on a daily level, underappreciated. Likewise, money comes in a wide variety of forms: coins, tokens, notes, cards; and therefore a range of media: metal, paper, plastic, textiles. This makes numismatic collections diverse, and full of potential, but also challenging to maintain and interpret.

This guide offers advice on collections care, management and display, public engagement, marketing and fundraising that will help you to make the most of your numismatic collections.

The following link is to the International Council of Museums' (ICOM) guidelines on running a successful museum. It is a valuable and respected resource for general questions:

<http://icom.museum/guide.html>

# **Chapter One: Museum Management**

## **I. Security and Access - How to protect your collection**

The security of your collection is paramount. Money comes in various shapes and sizes and the handling of coins in particular, especially if they are small, means they are at risk of being stolen or misplaced. Protecting your collection includes preventing damage as well as security. This section covers security; with damage prevention covered in [Chapter Two Part IV, Conservation and Storage](#).

Where possible the highest form of security must be in place for your entire collection, whether on display, in a handling collection or in storage. Security could be in the form of guards, security cameras, safety barriers, and locks or alarms. All should be active when the museum is open to the public. The safety and protection of the collections requires the co-operation of everyone at the museum.

### **Staff**

All responsible personnel and on-duty staff should be informed of the museum opening schedules and be notified of particularly vulnerable objects, or objects on loan to and from other museums. Regular checks on the museum exhibits should be made (at least once a day if possible), to reduce the possibility of compromised security and maintain the safety of objects and staff.

Many museums use contractors, freelancers or volunteers for the delivery of different museum projects, events and programmes. In the event that temporary members of staff are used in the museum, they must be briefed about all the security measures which are in place. You may wish to have a permanent member of staff in attendance when volunteers or contractors are working with parts of the collection.

Security staff are important points of contact with the public as they, most likely, will be in the galleries continuously. They should be encouraged to report all concerns to relevant internal staff and external authorities. It is also important to point out that security measures and policies should be followed and enforced by all members of staff and the responsibility should not be wholly placed upon security staff.

### **Locks and Keys**

Make sure displayed and non-displayed collections are securely locked away at all times and remember to remove keys from locks and store these in a secure area. It is advisable that all keys are marked and allocated to specific members of staff. This way you can trace lost or misplaced keys back to staff. For more valuable or sensitive collections or areas of the museum you may want to limit access to a few staff members.

### **Display Cases**

Make sure that all objects are securely displayed in cabinets to avoid both theft and accidents within the museum. All cabinets should be strongly constructed with no gaps in the glass. Metal or wood should be used to fill gaps, not rubber (as it is easily removed). One way to secure coins

is through mounting them with 'Three Point Pinning' (explained in detail in [Chapter 3 - II. Conservation and Security on Display](#)).

### Electronic Systems

If you have alarms or CCTV, these should be on at all times. These two systems assist with loss prevention however, they should not replace in-gallery security staff or secure cases and careful key management. A properly trained staff member on the scene of a theft can provide a more immediate response than any amount of equipment.

### Natural Disasters

You should protect your collections as far as possible from likely natural disasters, such as fires and floods. For example, you could install fire alarms in the museum, or raise displays and storage off the floor, if your museum is particularly susceptible to floods. It is advisable to check where your museum and collections' security is most vulnerable in order to provide the best measures possible.

### Remember...

The security measures of your museum should be suited to your location, visitors and collections. The suggestions here are reference points only. The extent of the protection and security you are able to carry out for your collection and staff should be in accordance with what is most viable, and what is most necessary. Detailed knowledge of your museum and collections, will allow you to provide the best possible institution for visitors and staff, which is both accessible and secure.

For more information see:

- <http://www.museum.or.jp/icom/ss-icms/page3.html>
- <http://www.collectionslink.org.uk/programmes/museum-accreditation/923-security-in-museums-archives-and-libraries-a-practical-guide>

For a discussion of how to recover after a breach of security see Marjan Scharloo, 'Badly shaken, deeply stirred: Life at the Museum after a Disaster' in *Proceedings of the 8th Meeting of the International Committee of Money and Banking Museums (ICOMON), Barcelona, 2001* (Barcelona : Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, 2003), pp.35-42  
<http://www.icomon.org/en/meetings/611/barcelona-2001>

## **II. Visitor Management**

This section highlights some of the practical questions which you might need to consider where visitors are concerned. Marketing is considered below in [Section III of this Chapter](#), visitor enquiries below in [Section VI](#), and Visitor Engagement in [Chapter Three](#).

For more information see 'Caring for the Visitor' in *Running a Museum: A Practical Handbook* compiled by UNESCO and ICOM: [http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=32886&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-URL_ID=32886&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html)

### **Understanding your audience's needs**

In order to manage your audience and their needs better you will need to understand who they are. As a starting point you need to know your basic visitor statistics. For instance: how many people visit your museum on average in a month/year; whether you mainly attract local, national or international visitors; and from what age ranges and socio-economic groups they come (see Section III below). This will help you to organise your opening times, staffing and general visitor enquiries better and more efficiently. Think about what skills your front of house staff will need to deal with your visitors. They may need training in basic first aid, information about the surrounding area, or you may need staff who can speak other languages.

### **How to manage your visitors**

It is important to consider, where possible, whether your museum has provided enough space and access for all your visitors, bear in mind young children, elderly and disabled persons. Think also about any facilities that you offer, such as toilets, cafes and shops, in relation to these groups.

Group and school visits can be managed by asking them to book in advance. Find out which exhibitions, displays they wish to visit and you can organise different times or dates for each visit. This will make your visitor numbers more manageable and can avoid overcrowding as well as keeping the visitor flow constant.

If you anticipate a particular exhibition to be more popular than others, you may want to implement a ticketing system or timed-entry to manage the crowds at busy times. You may want to extend opening hours on certain days, so that visitors can be spread out more evenly throughout the day or you might want to hire more staff for the days which you anticipate will be busier.

It would be best to place polite notices and have appropriate security measures in place for the safety of visitors and for the protection of the museum's collection such as:

- 'No food or drink in the gallery'
- 'No smoking'
- 'No (flash) photography'
- 'Please don't touch the objects,' etc.

Staff should have the ability to request a person/ group to leave the museum if they become disruptive or pose a threat to the safety and wellbeing of other people and the collections. However, most visitors are not difficult.

### **III. Publicity and Marketing**

#### **Knowing your collections and how to use them**

Knowing your collection is important to understand what it is that you are marketing to your audience. Objects and stories can attract more visitors so try and find an interesting link to your collections to draw more interest to your museum. This might be a new acquisition, a topical news story, an anniversary, or a local figure, for example.

Find out as much about your objects as possible, for instance:

- Where are they from, who used them and how were they used (or not used)?
- Where and when did the museum obtain them?
- Are they connected to people or places locally or nationally?
- Are there interesting facts or details about the objects?
- Is there an image on the object that is of significance to your audience?

Draw your audience in with stories of how the objects relate to them. You can use all of this information in your marketing as a way of encouraging people to visit. You can run exercises with your staff team and get each of them to research particular stories or write down interesting information about the collections. Make the most of your staff's existing knowledge and skills, they may be able to provide you with different ways to engage potential visitors.

Think about what it is that makes your museum and collections unique. This will help you to think about what will encourage visits to your displays. You might want to think about establishing a recognisable 'brand' for your museum which highlights your unique characteristics and creates a coherent design for all marketing materials, signage and resources.

#### **Knowing your audience and how to market to them**

Different groups of visitors use museums in various ways. Understanding the make-up of your audience will help you to attract them, as well as to manage them when they visit (as discussed in [Section II](#) above). Your audience can be tourists, families, schools, senior citizens etc. The best way to find out this information is to conduct a brief evaluation on your visitor make-up. What sorts of people are visiting your museum?

These are some of the questions you might want to think about before you start evaluating:

- How many people visit in a Day/ Week/ Month/ Year?
- What is the age range of the visitors you get?  
Under 25s/ 25 – 50/ 50 and above
- Who are your visitors?  
Male / Female / Students / Teachers / Tourists / Professionals etc
- How did they hear about this exhibition / museum?  
Leaflets / Posters / Email / Word of Mouth/ By Accident

You can find out what your general visitor make-up is by conducting a visitor evaluation or a short questionnaire. If possible, make sure you cover an even spread of ages, gender and background

of the different visitors across different times of the day. For instance, you may find that elderly women tend to come early in the morning whereas families come after school in the afternoon.

You might also want to investigate what your audience expects to get out of a museum visit, what are their aims and objectives for visiting the museum, and in particular what they might expect from a visit to a numismatic display. Is it a school visit, social visit, independent visit, group visit, or are they just passing-by?

Here are some ideas:

- Who attends your museum?  
Teenagers / Teachers / Families / Professionals
- How long is their average stay?  
Under 30mins / 30mins – 1 hour / more than 1 hour
- What is their main aim in visiting?  
Leisure / Education / Sightseeing / Personal interest/ Socialising
- What are their interests in money collections?  
Study / Social / Intellectual development

Comment cards can be useful to understand what your audience did or did not enjoy about an exhibition or event, this will also aid planning for future projects. You might want to ask them to leave some contact details if they are happy for you to ask them for further feedback.

As visitors' needs and expectations change over time, it is useful to carry out questionnaires or surveys every so often. This may be particularly insightful after a major exhibition, when a display is changed or when galleries have been updated. You can also do this when trialling new ideas or events. You may even choose to set up steering groups to find out about particular aspects of the museum, such as family or disabled access, engaging particular local groups, or addressing sensitive issues.

You should also think about which groups are not, or are rarely, visiting your museum. Why might this be? If you get few visually impaired visitors, do you need to improve access? If you rarely get young people visiting independently of school groups, you might think about setting up a focus group of young people to visit the museum and help you plan an exhibition. Of course, catering for one group's needs should not undermine the visit of other groups.

### **Paying for your marketing**

If your budget for marketing is small perhaps combine resources with other local museums or educational institutions (e.g. libraries and schools). You can decide on a set amount of money you each want to spend and combine your budgets in order to market more widely and extensively. For example, you can choose to take up one page of newspaper advertising together, with half the page about the museum and its events / exhibitions and the remaining half for your partner's. (Fundraising is discussed in more depth in [Section IV](#) below)

Paid marketing is not the only option. Sometimes small posters or flyers can be freely advertised in your local library, school or restaurant – look out for free ways that you can market your events and exhibitions. You can even set up competitions to design posters or flyers for different age groups, this will not only increase the awareness of the exhibition but it will also encourage

people to find out more about your museum and exhibition. The winner(s) could be given free tickets for an exhibition or a special behind the scenes tour to the museum, as well as having their design used in your marketing campaign.

Word of mouth is one of the best marketing tools for museums so encourage your visitors to tell their friends if they enjoyed the exhibit. One cheap (or free) method of marketing is to use digital media. Putting your museum on Facebook, Twitter, and other social networking sites is a good way of publicising your events while also engaging with a wider audience, and using word of mouth advertising. Setting up a simple website for your museum, and including interactive elements such as a curator's blog, on which visitors can comment, is also effective in reaching wider audiences. Remember that your website will be accessible to fewer users if it includes content which requires unusual software.

See also:

- This site by a small marketing consultancy firm includes some useful articles on marketing a small museum <http://www.attractmarketing.co.uk/articles/index.htm>
- A brief discussion by London's Victoria and Albert Museum on how they approach marketing <http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/m/marketing-the-v-and-a/>

## **IV. Fundraising and money**

Almost every museum could do more if they had more funding, and securing money to support the activities that are planned is an important task. To support this, it is important to have a clear outline or strategic plan for what you want your museum to be, and what you would like to achieve over the next year, five years and ten years (this is discussed in [Chapter 2, Part II](#) below). This will enable you to prioritise, and to decide which projects are essential and which ones can wait. For example, is it a priority to raise funds for a proper store room and update security? Is it a longer-term goal to raise funds for a temporary exhibition? By outlining this strategic vision, you can pin-point potential projects and areas for which you need to find additional funding, and are better equipped to seek the necessary resources. With particular areas prioritised and targeted ask yourself:

- Can you work with your existing budget to fulfil your strategic plan?
- Is there additional funding available to you from within your organisation?
- Can you generate income from, for example, ticket sales, a café or shop, or from other activities?
- Is there government funding, or grants from trusts, available for which your museum is eligible?
- Are there companies who might be interested in supporting your project as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility programmes?
- Are there individuals who are interested in your museum, who might help to fund your project?

Whatever approach you take to raising funding, you are likely to need to prepare a case for support for your museum and your project. The format of this will vary, but it will always need to include a clear argument for why the project is worth doing, and justification that the proposed budget is reasonable. If you are applying to an external organisation, you might need to outline for them the benefits of supporting your museum or your project.

Every country has different companies, trusts, and individual philanthropists, who support museums. The best information on these is available locally.

See also:

- The website of the Institute of Fundraising <http://www.institute-of-fundraising.org.uk/home/> which includes a code of ethics and guidance for fundraising.

An example of one specific project is discussed by Glenn Murray, 'The Segovia Mint Project: Recovering the activity in a Sixteenth-century Mint' in *Proceedings of the ICOMON meetings held in Madrid, Spain, 1999* (Madrid]: Museo Casa de la Moneda, 2001), pp.329-346

<http://www.icomon.org/en/e-proceedings/675/madrid-1999-proceedings>

## **V. Ethics regarding Provenance and Treasure**

Code of Ethics for Museums: <http://icom.museum/ethics.html>

Museums often find themselves facing ethical dilemmas with regards to numismatic collections, especially their provenance. The best way to protect your museum from a situation that could make you legally vulnerable is to know the specific laws and treaties that deal with antiquities. This is relevant to both national and international sale of antiquities. If someone comes to you with a coin they found on someone else's property, to whom does the coin belong? Does it belong to the finder, the landowner, or does the government own all antiquities?

Other problems arise when people raid archaeological sites and look to museums to purchase their finds. If you are offered archaeological artefacts research their background, and where they are supposed to have been found. Does the object reflect the location and circumstances of the supposed find?

In order for a museum to protect antiquities, it must research the provenance of an object. This means that you need to have documentation of the history of ownership of an object. If the finder of an object approaches the museum, have them sign a document stating that they are the first owner of the object, where they found it, and that it was obtained under legal circumstances. Documentation should be required for all objects before they are acquired.

The link below is from the Portable Antiquities scheme in the United Kingdom. This scheme was introduced to log all finds within the UK to create a record of the objects found by private individuals as well as creating a standard of practice for finding objects. It gives step-by-step advice on how to investigate an object's provenance.

<http://finds.org.uk/treasure/advice/adviceonbuying>

Remember to be particularly careful of objects offered for sale over the internet. Here are the UNESCO guidelines on how to deal with such sales.

<http://www.unesco.org/culture/fr/illicittrafficking/internettraffic/>

## **VI. Public Enquiries and Valuations**

Often, museum employees are asked to provide identification or valuation for objects. ICOMON recommends that money and banking museums can, if they wish, offer an identification service, but that they should not give a valuation (of monetary value or worth) for any objects. If you adopt this policy, you should ensure you brief your staff, and make it clear to enquirers that the museum is not allowed to offer valuations of objects submitted for identification. If there are local numismatic dealers or auction houses you could recommend that they might be contacted, but you should not recommend any one in particular.

The museum should refuse to authenticate formally or in writing, except in the case of official requests, as outlined in the ICOM code of ethics:

### *5.2 Authentication and Valuation (Appraisal)*

Valuations may be made for the purposes of insurance of museum collections. Opinions on the monetary value of other objects should only be given on official request from other museums or competent legal, governmental or other responsible public authorities. However, when the museum itself may be the beneficiary, appraisal of an object or specimen must be undertaken independently.

<http://icom.museum/ethics.html#intro>

If your museum offers an identification service, you may face the question of whether an object is genuine. It is important to be clear on your museum's policy in responding to these requests – some museums will provide authentication of objects, but many will not, and offer only an opinion on whether an object is genuine or not. You may wish to adopt a policy of only expressing an opinion on whether an object is genuine if you have examined the original object(s) – refusing to offer an opinion from photographs or descriptions of objects.

You may want to publicise that visitors are welcome to send in pictures or objects for identification (for you to respond to or look at in more detail at your own ease). You may also choose to offer an identification service on a specific day (when the museum may be quieter and where resources are available), so that visitors can come in to enquire about objects from a staff member specifically allocated to that task. If you would like people to leave objects with you to enable more detailed study, make sure you give the owner a receipt and store the deposited objects with their paperwork securely and separately from your own collection. The receipt should state the date, the contact details of the owner, confirm their legal ownership of the object, what it is, and what will happen to it.

You may want to provide some fact sheets for frequently asked questions, and frequently seen types of money. There may be types of coin in the region which visitors find and enquire about regularly, and providing prepared information on these can reduce your workload. These 'FAQs' could be on your website, and they could also be available for visitors on site.

# Chapter Two: Collections

## I. Types of Objects and their Challenges

Your numismatic collection will most likely contain metal coins as the biggest object group. But, it will probably also include a range of other objects and materials. Likewise, you may want to think about objects in other collection groups which link to numismatic ones. Each of these will require separate thought about conservation and storage, display and interpretation.

All types of object pose challenges in the display and interpretation of sensitive information. You will need to think carefully about how to tell stories that may have adversely affected certain social groups, or how to display objects which some groups find offensive. This would be one example of when a steering group can be helpful.

Types of objects in your collection could include:

- Coins: Generally made of metal and circular, these traditionally comprise the bulk of a numismatic collection. They will range in size and value, and appear in a number of different metals.
- Tokens: These tend to come in a range of materials. Tokens can be very useful in showing that numismatic collections contain more than just coins.
- Art Medals: These are often part of a numismatic collection as they show obvious similarities to coins and tokens. They help to vary the ideas and stories which you can display to visitors, but may also require more explanation to be understood.
- Award Medals: These can tell useful political and emotional stories through linking to key events and people. Generally made out of metal, they may also include fabric ribbons which have different conservation needs.
- Pin Badges: Modern badges may be made of a range of modern materials which are harder to conserve. They can often be useful in telling recent political stories.
- Paper Money, Cheques, and Shares: Paper objects are often intricate, colourful and visually stimulating. But they are also more fragile than most coins, require special conservation and storage, and are especially sensitive to light levels.
- Stamps: Like paper money, these vary the material and colour of displays and link well to national and international events, symbolism and relationships. But they also pose challenges in conservation, display and interpretation. (See [http://www.wokinghamphilatelic.org.uk/index\\_files/yourcollection.htm](http://www.wokinghamphilatelic.org.uk/index_files/yourcollection.htm) for more information)
- Credit Cards to M-Pesa: These contemporary monetary objects will help to link your collections to visitor's every day experience. However, they are often made of multiple materials, including plastics, and pose conservation challenges. In addition, bank cards carry personal details, and may pose a security challenge if you collect this type of material.

- Money Boxes: These help to engage visitors with processes of money saving and transfer, and can provide useful visual variety and stimulus in their range of designs. They may, however pose storage and conservation problems due to size or material.
- Purses and Wallets: Similar to money boxes, these help to show the ‘every day’ life of money and vary a display, but textile materials require different storage and conservation.
- Weights and Boxes: These help to show money-making processes, and can often be easily stored and conserved alongside coins. However, box sets can involve a variety of materials which may require different conservation environments.
- Traditional Currencies such as cowrie shells, jewellery, textiles, foodstuffs or other types of non-coin currency are often part of money collections. These are made from a wide range of materials, which can degrade and pose conservation problems.
- Organic Materials: You may wish to collect commodities which have been used as currency, or which use monetary imagery. These, however, pose obvious problems by degrading or attracting pests.
- Machines: These can include coin presses, cash registers, anti-counterfeit machines and credit card machines. Again they help to show the processes involved in making and using money. They can cause storage and transport issues due to size and weight, and come in a range of materials.
- Art works: Again these can help to vary displays, and show the ways in which forms of money can be used for artistic expression. But, again, they can cause storage and conservation issues in how far they differ from the bulk of your collections. The Foundation of the American Institute for Conservation runs a useful website of online resources which includes art conservation <http://cool.conservation-us.org/>.

## **II. Basic Planning and Policy**

Every museum needs a collections management policy. This creates the guidelines for how the collection is cared for and used (discussed in [Sections III](#) and [IV](#) below), and defines what should be collected. This policy should align with your wider mission as a museum and so needs to change as the museum's aims and needs change.

An acquisitions policy is more strategic and works longer term. In this you should work out your vision for the collection and how you will achieve this. Outlining clearly what you want to collect in the future allows you to develop coherent collections rather than merely acquiring more objects. The policy should make clear what you want to achieve, why, when, by whom and with what resources. It should project your activities over a number of years and be what drives museum activity. You will need to review your policy at regular intervals.

### **Knowing what you have**

You cannot plan for what you want without knowing what you have. The acquisitions policy therefore starts with a basic collections management system and a coherent structure to organise your collections (see [Section III](#) of this chapter). Once you have information on your existing collections and have organised them coherently, it is easy to see where the gaps are, and where you could most usefully expand them.

### **Knowing what you want**

Once you can see where the gaps and expansion spaces in your collection are, work out which you want to work on and put them in order of priority. Are there specific objects or groups of objects that will enhance particular displays or enable you to stage exhibitions relevant to a local group or event? It can be useful to review different areas of your collection in depth periodically to establish what additions would enhance them, in terms both of objects, and of media or resources which you could commission or make. It can also be worth thinking about your collections in relationship to other local museums so that you do not end up competing for the same objects. There can be several layers to your acquisitions policy tied to both long and short-term aims and activities.

### **Getting what you want**

In drawing up your acquisitions policy, you will need to tie your aspirations to what you can achieve, in terms of availability, finances and staff resources. Think about which gaps you can fill most effectively in relation to the size of your budget. Or, think about a special exhibition for which you might need certain objects, and for which a specific group or company might give you funding or even donate objects. You will need to maintain some flexibility in your policy in order to react to objects becoming available on the market or being offered to the museum by private donors.

As you acquire new objects you need to make sure that you have the resources, as well as the physical and intellectual manpower to store, conserve and interpret them. New acquisitions should never endanger the state of your existing collections by putting pressure on space or staff time.

## Acquisitions Policy

Your final acquisitions policy should include:

- Framework organised by interpretive themes that will guide your exhibits, programming and research as well as your collecting. It should be specific enough to aid decision-making.
- Strengths outlines what parts of the collection you will continue to expand because of their importance to your mission.
- Gaps lists materials which need to be added to your collections.
- Needs specify what you would like to add to your collections in both the short and long-term.
- Limits and overlaps makes clear what types of materials you will not collect because they are overrepresented in your collections or in nearby museums, or they are not relevant to your mission.
- Resources makes a plan to develop the finances, space and staff you'll need to expand your collection.

See also:

- Link to ICOM guidelines <http://www.savingantiquities.org/index.php>
- From 'Building your Collections' in *Minnesota History Interpreter Vol XXXV, No.5* (2007) [http://www.mnhs.org/about/publications/interpreter/sept\\_oct2007.pdf](http://www.mnhs.org/about/publications/interpreter/sept_oct2007.pdf)
- John E. Simmons, "Things Great and Small: Collections Management Policies" (American Association of Museums, 2006).
- An example of an acquisitions and disposals policy can be found here <http://www.collectionslink.org.uk/programmes/museum-accreditation/779-national-museums-liverpool-acquisition-a-disposal-policy>

### **III. Cataloguing and Collections Management**

#### **ID Standards**

Cataloguing your collection is vital for security, collections care, display, and for enabling staff and researchers to know what is in the collection. ICOM has developed categories that should be the *minimum* amount of information recorded for an artefact, for security purposes. These standards have been approved by museums all over the world as a necessity for collections management, but can of course be supplemented by more detailed or specific information.

See <http://archives.icom.museum/object-id/checklist.html>

The ICOM categories are:

- 1.) Type of Object: What is the object: coin, banknote, textile currency etc.
- 2.) Material and Techniques: What material was the object made from? How was it made? etc
- 3.) Measurements: Measure weight, diameter and die-axis of coins and medals; height and width (and depth where appropriate) for banknotes and other objects. The die axis is the difference between the two sides' alignment of a coin or medal. It is measured out of 12 like the numbers of a clock.
- 4.) Inscriptions and Markings: Is there an image on the coin / banknote / medal? Who is represented? What is written and in what language?
- 5.) Distinguishing features: Does it have a unique mark on it? A banknote or cheque will have a serial number; a coin or medal may have a mint mark or signature. Objects may be slightly torn or chipped. This information is valuable both for security reasons and for identifying if any marks are new and in need of conservation.
- 6.) Title: Does the piece have a title?
- 7.) Subject: What does the object portray? This may be a person, event, animal etc
- 8.) Date or Period: When was it made?
- 9.) Maker: Who made it? Was it a national mint? An artist?

These nine provide only the basic information. You should also make an effort to record:

- 10.) Inventory number: Create a uniform system of numbering to give each object a unique identity. Ideally this should also be recorded in a paper register with donor information.
- 11.) Related Written Material: Are there any catalogues, card indexes or publications which discuss the object? Do you have any related archival material?
- 12.) Place discovered / origin: Where did the object come from? Was it donated to the museum, found at an archaeological dig etc?
- 13.) Cross reference to related objects: Is the object part of a set or a hoard? It may be part of a special issue, or have come as a collected group from a single donor.
- 14.) Date documented: When was this record made?
- 15.) Donation information: Who gave the object and when? Where did they get it from? It's also useful to record contact details for the donor and prices if the object was purchased.

It is best to try to standardise this information, so that, for instance, all objects with the same maker will have the same spelling for that maker's name.

As soon as an object enters your collection, you should:

- 1.) Record the ICOM Object ID standard information.
- 2.) Write the dimensions, weight and description (and preferably inventory number) on a label that is kept with or near the object
- 3.) Take a photograph of the object. As well as being essential for security, this can enable you to check objects in your collection to see if there are any changes in their condition. The photograph should show both the front and back of the object, and sides where appropriate.

Once the information is gathered, you should catalogue it with the other information. The more information you have about an object, the better.

This link is to the ICOM Committee on Documentation Publication. It provides essential background information for creating your catalogue and its upkeep.

[http://www.museum.or.jp/icom/study\\_series\\_pdf/3\\_ICOM-CIDOC.pdf](http://www.museum.or.jp/icom/study_series_pdf/3_ICOM-CIDOC.pdf)

**An Example Catalogue Entry:**



Inventory Number: RC.1966.1

<u>Type of Object</u>	<u>Material &amp; Technique</u>	<u>Measurements</u>	<u>Inscriptions and Markings</u>	<u>Distinguishing features</u>
Roman Coin	cast Bronze	Weight: 2.56 g Diameter: 25mm Die Axis: 12	Obverse: Bust of Hadrian with Inscription Reverse: Britannia with inscription	Slight chip on reverse upper left edge.

<u>Title</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Date or Period</u>	<u>Maker</u>
No title	Emperor Hadrian	AD 119-120	Unknown

**Additional Information:**

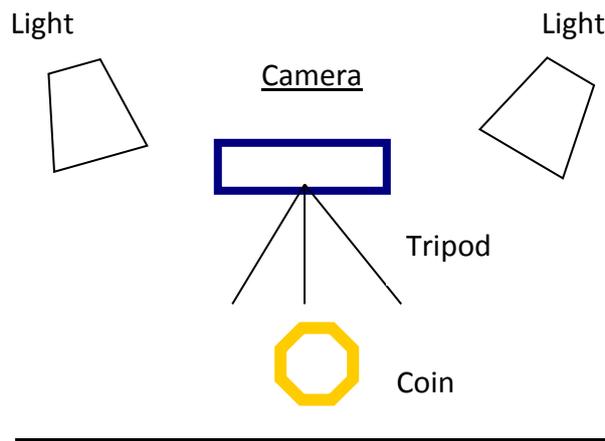
<u>Related Written Material</u>	<u>Place Discovered/ Location</u>	<u>Cross reference to related items</u>	<u>Date Documented</u>	<u>Donation information</u>
<i>Roman Coins of Britain</i> by John Black	Yorkshire, England	Found with roman coin RC.1966.2	January 3, 1966	Dr. George Smith, April 5, 1965

## Photography and scanning

### Photography

For security and your records, it is imperative to have photos of all your objects. You do not need a special camera, a simple, inexpensive digital camera with a “macro mode” for small objects will work. Here are some important tips for your security photos:

- Use a copy stand or tripod to ensure the photograph is clear and in focus. There is no point taking a photo if you can't use it to distinguish between objects.
- Use lighting from 2 sources to avoid shadows (see diagram below)
- Make sure all photos use consistent positioning – that they are all taken the same way up.
- Use a plain background, and try to keep it uniform for all photos (i.e.: all photos are taken against a white or black background)
- Take photos of both the front and back of an object
- Set the camera so all photos of a single object are taken from a uniform height. It is hard to judge perspective if they are all different.
- Place a ruler or a scale in the photo
- Include a reference number on a label in the photo to maintain accuracy and help to link images to object records.



Sample photo:



## Scanning

Scanning can also provide images for security, and is especially useful for flat objects. The same advice applies to scanning as to photography (except that there is no need for lighting). Generally, high relief objects as well as rare books are better photographed than scanned. Here are some further tips for using scans:

- Set the resolution to at least 300dpi for security, higher for smaller objects or for publication purposes
- Be gentle with objects and books (be careful not to break the spine of books)
- Be careful not to scratch the glass on the scanner. You can use OH transparency film to protect the surface.
- Place a ruler or scale in the scan as well as a reference number on a ticket or label.
- Make sure your objects are the correct way up on both the obverse and reverse.

Sample scan:



## Keeping your images safe

Keep multiple copies of the images. This could be in an offsite location, in a fireproof safe, or online for digital images.

Make sure the right photo is linked to the right object if you keep them in a database or filing system, as well as keeping secure backups in case a computer system crashes.

For more Information see

[http://www.museum.or.jp/icom/study\\_series\\_pdf/5\\_ICOM-AVICOM.pdf](http://www.museum.or.jp/icom/study_series_pdf/5_ICOM-AVICOM.pdf)

## **Organising your collection**

There are a number of ways you can organise your collection. It is important that you remain consistent with similar objects, as this helps you to find objects and to manage the collection. When choosing a system, allow for your collection to expand as well as to provide a coherent system of organisation.

- Object size: keep large objects and smaller ones separately. This uses storage space most efficiently.

- Object type: separating your collection by the type of object, such as medals, coins and paper money, is common. This also helps with conservation and security.
- Geographical / regional: Organise your collection by which region objects are from.
- Chronological: organised by either the date the object was made or by the date when it was acquired.
- Subject based / thematic: organised by subject, for example by putting all the medals depicting buildings together
- Artists: organised by the person who designed or made the object. This is often used for medals.

The traditional numismatic system for organising coins is a mixture of these:

1. Object type: Separate coins, medals, paper and other objects;
2. Geography: Within these groups, coins are then separated by region;
3. Rulers: Then organised chronologically by the rulers of that region;
4. Denominations / metals: Then numerically by denomination and/or hierarchically by metal.

Examples of other types of Systems:

- Paper money at the British Museum is organised by country, then issuing bank, then date, then denomination.
- Medals at the Royal Coin Cabinet in Stockholm are organised by country, then ruler or personalities or institutions or 'art'
- Certain types of coins are organised by international standards listed in catalogues. Such as Greek coins: by mint, following established catalogue orders.

With all of these examples, it is crucial that you pick a system that works with your collection and can be used consistently. For security and conservation, objects need to be coherently organised in a system that can grow and adapt to the various objects you may add to your collection in the future.

## **IV. Conservation and Storage**

This links to the ICOM Conservation Committee publication with helpful articles on conservation and storage: [http://www.museum.or.jp/icom/study\\_series\\_pdf/1\\_ICOM-CC.pdf](http://www.museum.or.jp/icom/study_series_pdf/1_ICOM-CC.pdf)

Useful articles can be found in the *Proceedings of the ICOMON meetings held in: Stavanger, Norway, 1995 and Vienna, Austria, 1996* (Madrid: Museo Casa de la Moneda, 1997) <http://www.icomon.org/en/meetings/608/stavanger-1995-and-vienna-1996>:

- Marina Lykiardopoulou, 'Conservation of Numismatic Collections'
- Rafael Feria, 'Basic Guidelines for storage and exhibition'

### **Maintenance of your Storage Room**

Good storage is critical to your collection. There is no point in cleaning or conserving your objects if they will then return to poor storage. Creating a clean, dry and secure storage area should be a priority in your museum. This is a list of elements required for a proper storage room:

Shelving: in storage areas should where possible be secured to the wall and tested for its weight-bearing limit. You do not want to have a situation where objects are damaged or destroyed because of a collapsed shelf or wall unit.

Cleanliness: Most problems occur when objects are placed in an unclean storage area. Before objects are placed in a room, it should be thoroughly cleaned to prevent unwanted pollutants, dust and pests from settling on your artefacts. There should be a cleaning schedule, to ensure the storage area is regularly mopped, dusted, and/or vacuumed to remove dust, dirt and pests. Do not use harsh cleaning chemicals, which can harm the objects; a wet rag should be fine. Dust and dirt provide a perfect environment for bugs and other pests, which can destroy museum objects therefore cleanliness is the most important, and easiest, way to protect your collection.

Temperature and Humidity: The most important aspect of conservation is to keep the temperature and humidity at stable levels year round. Most damage comes from rapid changes in these. If possible, have a store in a windowless room preferably in the middle of a building so none of its walls are exterior walls. The surrounding rooms help insulate the store and keep it at a regular temperature. If this is not possible, install window screens and blinds to protect your objects from direct sunlight and outside dust. You can also store objects individually or in small groups in boxes that 'buffer' temperature and humidity changes, to reduce their impact on the collection.

Pests Stores should be inspected regularly for pests. Bugs, vermin, birds and other insects and animals can be very hazardous to your collection and cause irreparable damage. Keeping your storage area clean is the best way to prevent infestations. Also, make sure that all windows, doors, vents and other openings do not allow insects and animals to get into the stores. Bug traps allow you to monitor what is in your storage area. You can buy specially-designed bug traps, or make your own with cardboard and sticky tape.

Regular Inspections All objects should be checked regularly, with vulnerable or fragile objects checked more frequently. Objects that are left for long periods of time could be damaged by pests, deterioration or even theft. A proper inventory done every year, or as often as is practical, should ask these four questions about each object:

- 1.) Is it still there? If an object is missing, security photos and the catalogue description ([Section III](#) above) will help the local authorities to be on the lookout for the object. Acting quickly is the easiest way to recover your objects.
- 2.) Is it safe? Make sure only a limited number of people have access and no one is left with the object unsupervised.
- 3.) Are there any signs of pests? Do you need to leave bug traps to see what may be getting into the store? Make sure that a storage area is thoroughly checked at the first sign of pests.
- 4.) Is it in the same state as when you last checked it? Once an object is in need of conservation, it can deteriorate very quickly. If an object starts to show the signs of bronze disease, water damage or other problems, remove it for care. Also, inspect the storage area to make sure the problem will not continue (such as fixing a leaky ceiling), and check that it hasn't spread to any surrounding objects.

## **Types of Storage**

There are various types of systems you can use to store your objects, in a range of combinations; they will vary depending on the size and material of your objects. Coins should not be allowed to touch each other in a storage area. Having metals scrape against each other can ruin the surface and chip or damage the coin. It is best to store each coin individually.

### Cabinets

Many numismatic collections are stored in wooden cabinets with trays that slide in on top of each other. Each tray has cut-outs for coins to go in, which can vary in size to accommodate different sizes of coin. This system is flexible and allows for quick inspections – a curator can open a tray and see all the coins immediately. The wood cabinets allow for air to pass around the objects and prevent condensation. The wood acts as a barrier for humidity and keeps the coin collection relatively stable as it absorbs moisture. Small coins can be kept in acrylic capsules within these cabinets to lessen the risk of loss.



However, if you decide to use wooden cabinets, you need to make sure that the wood is tested for conservation measures. Many types of wood “off-gas”, meaning that they give off corrosive

vapours that can damage or destroy coins. For this reason, lead or tin alloys should never be stored in wooden cabinets. In addition, many types of paint or stain can damage objects, so you should ensure your cabinets are untreated and unpainted.

### Envelopes

Coins can also be stored in individual, acid-free paper envelopes. This can be a very inexpensive and safe method of storage. The envelope protects the coin from touching other coins and damaging them. You can also write vital information, such as the object number and description on the outside of the envelope.

Acid-free envelopes or tissue paper are also a good way to store paper money, as placing them in tightly sealed plastic sleeves or boxes can trap moisture. Acid-free paper is important as this doesn't contain acidic chemicals which will corrode the surface of coins.

The problem with envelope storage is that in order to do security and conservation checks, you



need to open every envelope, which can be time consuming. Likewise envelopes do not always fasten shut securely.

### Boxes on trays



Individual, conservation grade boxes in metal or wood drawers can be used for any type of object. All boxes and glue need to be acid-free. This type of storage is good for odd size objects, such as medals, that might not fit into the cut-outs of pre-made cabinet trays.

If you have metal cabinets or trays, you may need to use some sort of silica gel, or other humidity prevention material. Metal can cause condensation and water damage to your objects. Make sure the silica gel is changed regularly.

#### Melinex envelopes and ring binders

Melinex is a special type of storage material. At first glance, it resembles plastic but it doesn't trap moisture or off-gas like regular plastics do. This material is excellent for storing paper money, as you can see both sides of the banknote or stock certificate without having to handle it. Many melinex sleeves come with holes so they can be stored in ring binders.



The best types of binders are acid-free cardboard. This creates a moisture-free, light-free environment for the paper money.

However, Melinex can be expensive. If you have the ability to buy melinex sleeves and acid-free ring binders, they will be well worth the investment. However, don't try to create this type of storage with other plastic sleeves, unless you are sure they are suitable for long-term storage. PVC is particularly bad, since it deteriorates and can damage objects stored in it.

See <http://www.icomon.org/en/meetings/608/stavanger-1995-and-vienna-1996>

- Marina Lykiardopoulou-Petrou, 'Display Materials Responsible for the Deterioration of Coins'
- Edna Southard, 'Seeking a System for Simultaneous storage and display of coins'

and Charles S Tumosa, 'Wood versus plastic: the museographic materials' in *Primer Congreso Internacional de Museología del Dinero, Madrid, España, 18-22 Octubre 1999* (Madrid, Museo Casa de la Moneda, 2001) <http://www.icomon.org/en/e-proceedings/675/madrid-1999-proceedings>

## Conserving and storing specific materials

Coins and tokens are made from a range of different metals, each of which has its own conservation challenges:

### Metal

- COPPER ALLOY / BRONZE disease is a particularly damaging form of corrosion. It can be kept from getting worse by dry storage but it progresses quickly above 35%RH (Relative Humidity). If you notice a pale green powdery corrosion spreading the object may need to be chemically stabilised.



- SILVER turns black (tarnishes) when sulphur reacts with the surface. Air pollution, handling and chemicals in some textiles can make this worse. Wear gloves if you handle silver. Excavated silver can be very brittle and cracks easily; handle this with care. When corroded the surface of silver is covered with bumpy purple-grey corrosion.



- GOLD is usually shiny and in good condition as it is resistant to most corrosion. However, corrosion or disease can occur due to impurities in the metal. See Martina Griesser and Rene Traum, 'Unexpected risk in coin collections: causes for the infestation of gold coins and medals by 'brown spot corrosion' and first attempts for handling the phenomenon,' presented at the XIV Annual Meeting of ICOMON, Vienna 2007



<http://www.icomon.org/en/abstracts/22>

- LEAD forms a white powdery corrosion in contact with paper, cardboard and wood. Even the gases given off by paper and card can cause corrosion, so keep these objects away from cardboard boxes.



**Lead is a poison which can be absorbed by your skin.** You must always wear gloves when you handle it! Don't brush off the white powder, as you can inhale it and damage your health. These objects should be stored away from other objects and clearly marked "poisonous."

### Handling

A good rule of thumb when handling metal objects is always to wear gloves. This is especially true with modern coins which have a smooth machine finish. One finger print can ruin this finish and

destroy the look of the coin, and the fingerprint can etch into the surface, making it very difficult to remove.

### Cleaning

Many metal objects have a natural patina which is part of the history of the object. Be careful in your attempts to clean or repair your metal objects, as often this could damage or destroy them. However, many times you will want to clean objects before putting them on display. Cleaning takes a long time and should never be rushed.

Typically the best way to clean an object is with simple, soft hand tools and, if possible, the use of a low grade microscope. Things like an extra soft toothbrush or wooden cocktail sticks work particularly well. Take your time and work slowly. Often dirt has been on the object for hundreds, if not thousands, of years. Taking away that dirt can easily remove important parts of the coin itself.

Practice with scrap objects until you get used to working with small materials. Never use wire brushes or other harsh metal objects as this will often remove the surface detail of the coin. Metal corrosion can sometimes be poisonous so always wear a dust mask and disposable gloves when cleaning objects.

**When in doubt, do not attempt to clean or alter an object without consulting an expert. ICOM-CC offers an online forum for various types of materials. Join to submit questions and photos of objects about which you are unsure: <http://www.icom-cc.org/31/working-groups/metals/>**

### Display

Metal objects, although strong, are still subject to environmental factors while on display. Coins should be checked regularly in their cases to make sure they are not corroded or causing damage to other objects in the display case.

See also:

- <http://finds.org.uk/conservation>
- Robert W. Hoge 'Conservation Rules for Coins and Medals' in *Proceedings of the ICOMON meetings held in: Stavanger, Norway, 1995 and Vienna, Austria, 1996* (Madrid: Museo Casa de la Moneda, 1997) pp. 21-30 <http://www.icomon.org/en/meetings/608/stavanger-1995-and-vienna-1996>

### **Paper**

Paper money can be very delicate and fragile, despite the fact that it was intended for handling and use. There is little that can be done if it is damaged, so you should make every attempt to prevent anything from happening to your paper by using proper storage and handling.

### Handling

Paper money is often made of small fibres that can easily tear. Because of this, do NOT wear gloves (cotton or latex) as this can create tension with the note itself. Banknotes should be handled as little as possible. If necessary handle a note, with thoroughly clean and dry hands. As a

general rule, do not attempt to clean your notes. This will almost always cause more harm than good.

### Storage

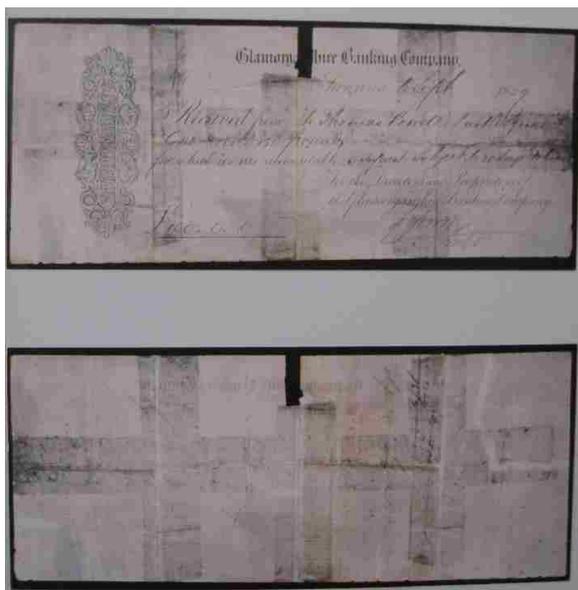
Paper is particularly sensitive to various changes in moisture, temperature, and light. The best inexpensive way to store notes is to place them in acid-free envelopes. Do not store them in plastic or tightly sealed boxes as this can trap moisture and cause condensation. Ideally, you should place them flat with acid free tissue paper between each note. Do not fold or bend the notes. They can be stacked on top of each other if there is a buffer paper in between each note. Paper should always be out of direct light, both sunlight and artificial light. Objects should be stored in closed cupboards to keep out moisture and dust. These can either be made of metal or wood, however metal should have a baked enamel or power-coated finish. Soft resinous wood is not good for paper, however old, well-seasoned hardwood such as mahogany would be fine.

To the right is a picture of paper money damaged by damp and wet conditions. Even wrapping in a plastic bag in humid conditions can create damage like this. This is why acid-free envelopes and paper as well as cardboard boxes are the best storage. They absorb some of the damp and do not create condensation.



### Damage

If you have a note that is torn or damaged, do not attempt to repair it. Paper is too delicate and you will most likely end up doing further damage. Nothing should ever be affixed or placed on the note such as plastic adhesive tape, staples, metal pins or glue (even for display purposes). This will permanently damage the note.



To the left is an example of paper with plastic tape adhesive used to repair it – you can see how the adhesive tape has permanently discoloured the note.

Sometimes mould can grow on paper notes. This is because the humidity is too high in the storage area. If you notice mould on your notes, remove the affected objects from your collection immediately and store in a different area as it can quickly spread between notes. Then analyse your collection and storage areas, moving the paper to a less damp environment if possible, or at least adding more moisture absorbing materials to the storage area.

### Display

Avoid any exposure to direct sunlight or any other type of strong light. This can cause ink to fade and compromise the integrity of the paper. A note should have controlled illumination between 80 and 150 lux for no longer than three months (lux is a measure of the intensity of luminance). Florescent lights also need to be filtered for Ultraviolet (UV) light. This may mean that you need to swap around objects on display to ensure they are not over-exposed to light.

See Graeme Gardiner, 'Conservation Rules For Paper Money And Archives' in *Proceedings of the ICOMON meetings held in: Stavanger, Norway, 1995 and Vienna, Austria, 1996* (Madrid: Museo Casa de la Moneda, 1997) pp.36-7 <http://www.icomon.org/en/meetings/608/stavanger-1995-and-vienna-1996>

### **Plastic**

Plastics differ from each other in their care needs. The exact recipe of each plastic, including its range of additives, influences how it will age. Even the pigment used to colour an otherwise identical object can cause objects to age differently. Early plastics are particularly vulnerable, especially those based on cellulose or PVC. But, most plastics are relatively stable if looked after appropriately. Degradation, when it does occur, is irreversible making good care vital in the first place.

### Storage

Plastics should be kept in a separate area to metals, paper and organics. They can quickly degrade and damage other objects. It is important that plastics are kept in an area where air can circulate around the objects to prevent gases from being trapped.

### Handling

Gloves of some inert material, such as latex, should always be worn. Cotton gloves are not recommended as they may leave specks of lint on plastics that have become tacky. Always hold the object in a manner that puts as little strain on any part of it as possible.

### Display

As with other objects, plastics need to be checked regularly when on display. While they are not as sensitive as paper or organics, they can quickly degrade and gases given off by eroding plastic can be trapped in a display case. With precautionary measures – checking regularly, using reasonable amounts of light and careful temperature control – the plastic object should be fine.

### Useful Resources:

- [www.plastiquarian.com](http://www.plastiquarian.com): Excellent site of the Plastics Historical Society, especially good on the history and uses of plastics and their inventors/manufacturers up to 1965. Includes useful index of trade names/materials/manufacturers.
- [www.bpf.co.uk](http://www.bpf.co.uk): The leading trade association of the UK's plastic industry. This is useful on materials and their histories and capabilities.
- [www.plasticsresource.com](http://www.plasticsresource.com): American Plastics Council website, with succinct history of particular plastics up to 1950.

## **Organics/ Textiles**

Organic materials are anything made from animal or plant constituents, and carbon-based manmade products. These include ivory and wood as well as textiles and food stuffs. Paper and Plastics are treated separately in sections above.

### Storage

Organic materials require special consideration as they are particularly susceptible to degradation. They can also transport insect or fungal infestations into your collection which can spread to other materials, or to storage structures causing permanent damage. Make sure you know the provenance of organic material when it enters the collection. Objects may need freezing to kill any infestations.

Many organics will need careful temperature and light control and relative humidity monitoring to prevent decay. They should be stored separately from other types of materials to achieve this and to prevent infestation spreading.

Textiles are best stored rolled up so as not to put stress on seams etc. Acid free tissue can be used in a roll as padding

### Cleaning

Surface substances need careful consideration on organic materials. Liquids may have been applied to objects as part of a ritual process, or objects may have been intended to change and decay. This means that it can be more appropriate for some 'dirt' to remain as part of the object.

Some objects are smoked during rituals, altering surfaces which also need to be taken into consideration. When removing surface dirt, it should be done to stabilise an object, considering preventative measures over aesthetics.

### Handling

The choice to wear gloves has been much debated. Many people agree you should wear gloves at all times when handling objects, however others think that their fibres can cause more damage. Many practicing conservators agree that you can handle objects directly as long as you have very clean hands.

Like other objects, organics and textiles need handling such that no strain is put on parts of the object. This may involve making a temporary mount for handling.

### Display

Like plastics and paper, organic materials need careful checking while on display, and often controlled light levels and temperature and relative humidity. Regular checking will also help you to spot any infestation or decay before it becomes critical or spreads to other objects. Good housekeeping is the best way to check objects for decay. This means checking environmental conditions and cleaning inside cases regularly.

See Josette Rivallain, 'Les Monnaies Traditionnelles et leur Conservation' in *Proceedings of the ICOMON meetings held in: Stavanger, Norway, 1995 and Vienna, Austria, 1996* (Madrid: Museo

Casa de la Moneda, 1997) pp.45-7 <http://www.icomon.org/en/meetings/608/stavanger-1995-and-vienna-1996>

There is a range of international forums, which can be consulted for specific objects:

- ICOM's Wet Organic Archaeological Materials Group: <http://www.icom-cc.org/42/working-groups/wet-organic-archaeological-materials/>
- ICOM's Textiles Working Group: <http://www.icom-cc.org/40/working-groups/textiles/>
- The Textile Conservation Centre: [www.textileconservationcentre.soton.ac.uk](http://www.textileconservationcentre.soton.ac.uk)

## **V. Library and Archives Management**

A good resource for library management is the UNESCO website

<http://www.unesco.org/webworld/libraries/manifestos/libraman.html#4a>

The Museum library and archives should form part of your overall Collections Policy and Plan, to help you to consider what resources you need to develop in order to support knowledge of, and research into, your collection. Like your object collections they will probably be formed of a mixture of donations and purchases.

These could include:

- Printed Books relevant to your collections, including publications on generally relevant subjects, and publications that specifically discuss objects in your museum. These will probably include exhibition and sales catalogues, history books, academic theses and journals.
- Digital Publications. Information is now very widely available on the internet. You should consider including a computer among your library resources with access to online publications and discussions. This will also help to save you storage space.
- Archives linked to your collection. This will include documents that came to the museum with an object donation, and records of the museum's past administration and correspondence. These may increasingly be in digital as well as paper form.

The same general principles of storage, handling and management should apply to your library and archives as to your object collections. These may form part of a museum-wide library if your objects are only a part of the whole collection, which may affect how you are able to classify and catalogue your section. It may be that you have a small working library, while most of your books are housed centrally.

### **Library Classification and Cataloguing**

Creating simple classmark shelfcodes will allow you to organise and access your books. There is no need to use a complex classification system, such as DEWEY, as a numismatic library divides up easily with your collections. You can use a three-part system of Series, Section and Author headings, which will keep books in relevant groupings by classmark.

You should then set up a simple catalogue to enable both staff and researchers to find books most effectively within this system. This can be kept in hard copy on cards, or on a computer spreadsheet. The basic information you need for each item is:

- ISBN Number
- Author's Name
- Title
- Publication Date
- Publication Place

There are various methods which you can choose to organise and store your library and archive. In general the two types of material should be kept separate but can be stored alongside each

other. You might choose to combine a number of the below depending on your collections and available space:

1. With your Collection: If your classification system uses the same groupings as your objects, you can house your books next to the relevant part of the collection.
2. Centrally Even with a classification that matches your collection, you may find it easier for conservation reasons to house all your books in a separate space central to the whole collection.
3. By size: Arranging books and archival folders by size will enable you to maximise your storage space for shelving.

This links to the International Federation of Libraries and Archives' 'Statement of International Cataloguing Principles' <http://archive.ifla.org/VII/s13/icp/>

### **Conservation and Handling**

The same general considerations apply to archival material and publications as to paper money. These need to be kept out of direct sunlight and in low relative humidity. Library storage areas should be dusted regularly.

Materials should be handled with clean dry hands and in such a way that strain is not put on fragile parts of a book or sheet, especially the spine of a book. If you are making your library available to researchers you should think about purchasing some simple book rests to support the spines of books while they are being read, and some 'book snakes' to hold books open without bending the spines.

Where books and manuscript materials have been damaged, you should never repair these with sellotape. Damaged bindings can be covered and supported with a special dust jacket made from acid-free card. Vulnerable single sheets can be kept in Melinex sleeves to prevent further damage.

### **Archival Material and Rare Books**

Archival material should be considered like objects and catalogued with these as outlined in [Section III](#) above). This should include object type and material, maker, date and country etc. Archival materials should be stored in acid-free envelopes and boxes or, if possible in Melinex sleeves.

It is also worth checking through your library to see if you have anything rare, as such books can easily be overlooked. Rare books can be valuable and fragile, and should therefore be stored separately, in a locked cupboard, and in controlled conditions of temperature, humidity and light.

More useful information on archive management and care can be found at:

- <http://www.bl.uk/blpac/publicationsleaf.html>
- <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/information-management/guidance/a.htm>

# **Chapter Three: Exhibition Design and Visitor Engagement**

Exhibits can either be permanent or temporary displays. In a permanent display you will want to highlight the strengths of your collection, as well as the star objects. You will, however, need to bear in mind the limits to display time posed by such conservation issues as light exposure. Temporary displays can be a useful way to make fragile objects available for view for a limited time period. It is also a good idea to theme temporary displays to anniversaries or topical concerns which will draw in a wider audience. You might theme a temporary display in partnership with another local cultural attraction, so that visitors to one will be encouraged also to see the other.

You will need to create a timetable for when each temporary display will be staged, creating a regular series of displays over a year or number of years, which will continue to draw visitors back to the museum. Ensure that your timetable allows plenty of time to install and de-install displays, as well as to do the research and preparation necessary. You may want to request loan objects from other museums, for which you will need to check the other museum's requirements for environmental controls and security. You may need to change elements of your museum practice in order to secure these loans.

## **I. Design and Interpretation**

Every exhibit, whether it is permanent or temporary, starts with a single idea. This idea must be concise in order for the exhibit to have maximum impact. When too many ideas are being presented, the audience too easily loses the main objectives and it is more difficult to tell the story. Therefore, it is important to flesh out your theme as much as possible so that there are clear and simple goals for the exhibit. The best method is to start with an exhibition scope document. Keeping each section limited to two or three goals, forces you to pare down large exhibits and keeps a common objective.

### **Think about the questions that your visitors might have**

To determine how you set your exhibition it is important to have a target audience in mind. It is recommended you have a couple of visitor profiles in mind:

- What level of knowledge might your visitors have; little, general or expert knowledge?
- What might they want to find out from these exhibitions?
- What will be their average age, interests, and background?

Once you have developed your target audience profile, the exhibition planning should be catered towards this. As a result, you will have a consistent narrative and build your target audience group.

**Example of an exhibit at the British Museum in late 2008 on the new British coinage:**

Working title: **Designing Change: the Coins of Elizabeth II**

Dates: **18 September 2008 to 22 February 2009**

Venue: **Room 69a**

**1. Project objectives** (internal):

- To show the Ironside archive of drawings and plaster models for the design of the UK decimal coins
- To show the process of designing coins, from the first idea to the money in your pocket
- To show how that process has changed over the past 50 years
- To answer visitors' questions about the new coin designs
- To build on the BM's relationship with the Royal Mint (partner for this exhibition)

**2. Learning Outcomes**

Our aim is that visitors will:

- Enjoy their visit to the exhibition
- Learn about the process of designing coins
- Learn about the new designs that are entering circulation
- See the coins in their wallet differently – as miniature works of art
- Understand that the BM collects and displays contemporary material

**3. Audiences**

Core

Around 80% of visitors to gallery 69a are attracted into the gallery as they pass.

Target

People with art/design interests?

People who are interested in the new coin designs

**4. Attendance**

69a displays usually attract about 100,000 people in each 6-month period

## Choosing Objects for Display

Deciding which objects are to be used for an exhibition can be one of the hardest parts of creating it. However, by focussing on the key messages you have defined for your display you can pick the objects that best tell the story. The objects serve as links in the story so always keep in mind what you want your audience to understand and how certain objects will highlight that.

Often, it helps to use a range of objects, including non-numismatic ones, to give context to the money collections. For example: if there is an image of a basket on your note, perhaps have such a basket next to the note to help people understand why it was chosen for the design. Think of including photos, maps, and close up scans of the objects so your audience can better understand your story.

Most importantly, think about the practicalities of your objects early! If you choose a large, heavy, valuable object think about how you will mount it, and where. The same applies to objects that

are sensitive and easily damaged - if you want to place them on display, think where they can be away from light and in a secure case with stable display conditions. You may need more than one example of a sensitive paper object, so that you can rotate which example is on display. Such practicalities can dictate where certain objects can go and will affect the flow of your display.

## **Gallery Design**

### Design

Consider your exhibition space: What is the size and shape of your space? What display cabinets can you use? Which of these can be moved or not moved? Visitors often do not follow a single route through a display space, so think about how people might move from the entrance to the exit of the space, and how you might lay the display out to make the route as easy and clear as possible.

How will your exhibition look overall? Will it be displayed in a simple, modern style, or more historically, with large groups of objects making a visual impact, or mixing collections? The look of your display should fit with the profile of your target audience as well as the look of your museum, and the subject being discussed.

### Displaying Objects

As you are choosing your objects, think about the order in which you would like to display them. First, think of the sensitivities and security of the objects. Fragile objects should not be near windows with direct sunlight. You should start to think about the layout and order of your objects as you are editing what will go in the display.

To start, you should identify key objects that are the most important aspects of your exhibit. Make sure these are displayed and lit obviously. These should be spread out around your gallery to enhance the flow of the story, and of the visitors. Think about how people use the gallery space, and work with that to create an engaging display.

It is important to consider the height and width of displays in your museum as, for example, younger people or visitors in wheelchairs may not be able easily to see objects at the top of the display. Smaller objects need to be at a reasonable height level and larger objects may be more suitable at a higher level or in a separate display cabinet. It is, likewise, necessary at an early stage to think about lighting and case layouts, both for conservation purposes as well as for highlighting specific objects. Be careful not to backlight coins as it is hard for people to see the detail – raking light is best.

A great way to practice designing your cases, objects and labels is through doing mock-ups. These can be simple, such as using scrap paper cut in the shape of your objects and mock up labels to see how it fits in the case. Be creative! Think about how you will draw the visitor into each case and allow them to walk away understanding your objectives for the exhibit.

## **Text: Panels, Labels and Handouts**

Most importantly, you need to place your objects in context. You will probably need at least two different types of text. Each object should be accompanied by a brief label (probably no more

than about 50 words) explaining what it is, when it was made, where and by whom, and why it is noteworthy. The display will probably also have larger text panels in each section, explaining what story that group of objects tell, and how they fit into the display as a whole. These help to orientate the visitor within your display, and keep the narrative clear.

Information panels or text should be approachable by both adults and children without being too complicated or academic, and not oversimplified. Think about alternative ways to explain your point, so that a broader range of visitors can read and understand it. Think about what words might need explaining for visitors, and what words might not be familiar to visitors from other places or other countries. When writing text, always remember that the key is to show the visitor as simply and clearly as possible why an object is part of your story, and what your story is.

Labels and panels should be clearly written and as near as possible to the objects they are describing. To make these as accessible as possible you will need to consider the size, font and colours of your text and background. There may be a specific font required by your museum which coincides with branding. The most accessible colour to use for text is black on a white background. If you are considering brighter colours, or a specific colour theme for the display you need to consider what is the best colour text to read.

You can include maps, photo enlargements, and other visual aids to assist your audience with understanding the story of the objects. The visitor profile will help you to determine what images and materials to use for your exhibition. If your visitor profile is aged 10-12 years you may consider putting simplified and colourful maps, highlighting the specific areas the exhibition covers. Younger children or visually impaired visitors may need magnified images. You may also think about using a range of interactives including timelines or reconstructed images to help narrate your exhibition.

Think also about other possibilities beyond your text panels. For example, handouts with more detail, in other languages, or in large font/Braille will cater for different visitor needs.

## **Multimedia**

Increasingly, as well as text panels, you may want to think about including multimedia elements in your displays. Short videos, games and computer resources can help people to understand the objects in a different way, and can add aspects which are not available solely with text. However, sometimes the variety and types of multimedia can distract visitors from the focus and narrative of the display. In planning your exhibition consider what role the multimedia will play.

Appropriate interactives and multimedia will be wholly dependent on your exhibition budget and objectives, the objects on display and your text panels. You need to find a balance that works for your visitors and your displays.

Here are some things to consider:

### Make sure it works and you have technical support

It is best to keep the type of multimedia you choose simple. Complicated interactives require investment, and can take a lot of time to set up, maintain and install. They can add costs for

technical support (in terms of staff) or purchasing additional computer programs. Broken interactives are frustrating for visitors, and reflect badly on the display and the museum in general.

#### Make sure it adds to the exhibit rather than taking over

High-tech information can distract visitors from the main objective of the exhibition. Multimedia should complement the narrative of the exhibition and give additional information, but not draw visitors' attention away from the key messages or from objects.

#### Think about Audio

Audio tracks can help tell the story of your exhibition. These could be in the form of narrated texts or sounds related to the production or life of the object. You could add relevant musical recordings, or stories told by people associated with the object. You need to make sure, however, that the audio flows with the exhibition and does not distract visitors' attention from the objects and display content.

#### Mechanical interactives can also be good

Multimedia doesn't need to be in the form of computerised images or figures, it is sometimes equally effective to have an enlarged plaster cast or mould made of the object on display (for example, the mould pictured here used in the British Museum 'Designing Change' exhibition). This not only displays details of the object but can also provide a tactile experience for your visitors. As with digital media, the key is to make sure your interactives are durable and simple.



For more on exhibition design and interpretation see:

- Joe Cribb, 'The HSBC Money Gallery at the British Museum: access to excellence' in *Proceedings of the ICOMON meetings held in Madrid, Spain, 1999* (Madrid] : Museo Casa de la Moneda, 2001), pp.191-205 <http://www.icomon.org/en/e-proceedings/675/madrid-1999-proceedings>

- Harald Nilsson, 'The case of showing a coin, ideas and reality behind the new coin cabinet, Stockholm' in *Proceedings of the ICOMON meetings held in Madrid, Spain, 1999* (Madrid] : Museo Casa de la Moneda, 2001), pp.206-210 <http://www.icomon.org/en/e-proceedings/675/madrid-1999-proceedings>
- The blog posts written during the installation of the British Museum's new Citi Money Gallery, which consider all aspects of the planning and installation <http://blog.britishmuseum.org/category/collection/money-gallery/>

## **II. Conservation and Security on Display**

All objects need to have security photographs and accurate records before they are placed on display. This can help with comparing for conservation purposes as well as for security reasons.

The first thing to think about is security while on display. All cases need to be sturdy, with no gaps in the wood, metal or glass. All cases must be locked at all times when people are in the galleries and the keys stored in a separate locked area which members of the public cannot access. Cases must be secured to a wall or podium so that they cannot be lifted.

Secondly, every object should be checked thoroughly to see if there are any conservation concerns. Although preferably, you should display objects that are in the best condition possible, there may be situations where you must display an object that has some corrosion. Go through the material outlines in Chapter 2 [Parts I](#) and [IV](#) to make sure all degradation is inert and will not damage other objects in the case. These objects should be monitored as much as possible. Lighting, heat and other types of corrosion can also easily damage your objects. Items on display need to be checked regularly to ensure that the strain of display (such as exposure to light/humidity) is not permanently damaging them.

### **Three Point Pinning**

An easy way to secure coins and medals is through a technique called Three-Point Pinning. This means that the object will be pinned to the display board in three places. For small items, hobby pins can be used. For bigger, heavier items, use larger nails. All pins and nails should be coated in a special plastic paint so that the surface is inert and the object is not damaged by the metal of the pin or nail.



Start by carefully placing the coin on the mounting surface. Place pins at the “4” “8” and “12 o’clock” positions of the coin. Then carefully nail these into the wood without the coin in place. When all the pins are secure, place the coin in between them and push the nails so they are secure around the coin.

It should look like this. Three point pinning allows the coin to be held both sturdily and securely. It cannot fall off the board, and the pins prevent it from being easily removed.

## Documenting what is on Display

When an object is removed from storage and put on display, it is crucial to leave an “object removed for display” label in the envelope or drawer. This makes clear that the object is not missing. The label should include the date and purpose of the object being removed as well as the name of the curator who removed the object.

*e.g. 1943 penny removed 15/1/08 for Display in Gallery 5. – Curator: A. Smith*

You do not need to go into great detail but keeping records like this is essential for the security of your objects.

Similarly, if an object is removed temporarily from the display for any reason, you should replace it with a simple note saying “Object Removed” in its place. This allows Security Staff to see if an object has been stolen or temporarily removed for study or conservation. Staff should be briefed to report instantly anything that is missing without an object removed label.

### **III. Bringing your Exhibit to life**

Museums are constantly facing the challenge of bringing in new audiences while sustaining their existing ones. Think of ways that you can engage your audience with the objects to help tell your story, through programmes and events. These might include:

- **Talks and lectures**: One of the easiest ways to engage people with the objects is to host talks and lectures in your galleries. They can be by members of your staff talking about the objects and why they are important, you could invite a visiting scholar or professor from a local university, or other expert to host a special lecture that ties into your objects. If your objects are significant to a particular local group, you could invite them to stage a discussion in the gallery.
- **Live interpretation**: There are many ways to do this. For example, you could have someone in the gallery dressed in traditional or historic clothing demonstrating how your objects were made or used; you could have a children’s story time where they are read relevant fables; or you could have a musical performance or play in the galleries.
- **Object handling**: This can be an engaging and memorable experience for your visitors. Since money objects are often small and hard to see in detail when on display, a chance to hold them and look closely can expand the exhibit for your audience. However there are major security factors that should be in place if this is allowed. Handling objects should be a separate section to your main collections, which you recognise will be worn with use. Alternatively, you could have replica objects available for handling by visitors. All objects should be in a strong, stable condition that can tolerate extensive handling, and if genuine objects are being handled, they should be supervised by a member of staff or a volunteer.
- **Family events**: Museums are a great place for families to spend the day together. You can capitalise on this interest through many different ways for example:
  - a. **Self-guided tours**: You can create a worksheet or learning pack that family members can solve together. An example of this is “Minted” at the HSBC money gallery in the British Museum (see the [APPENDIX – Examples of Family/ school trails](#))
  - b. **Organised sessions**: These are good for school holidays or weekends, and could include things like:
    - i. Designing a coin/banknote/medal, by thinking about the designs on money
    - ii. Make a purse or money box, to think about saving and hoarding
- **Schools**: Organising trips for school children to come to the museum can help students learn and explore their history, as well as create lifelong museum supporters. It also builds useful relationships for your museum with local schools
  - a. To attract teachers to bring their class, it might be a good idea to send them information about the museum displays, so that they can plan their visit.
  - b. **Resources**: you could provide information packs or educational resources for teachers to use at the museum, or at school
  - c. **Organised education sessions** for school groups can focus on particular themes, relevant to the school curriculum, for example:
    - i. Economic topics, such as inflation and prices

- ii. Financial skills, such as saving, spending and budgeting
  - iii. Historical topics, such as using Roman coins to learn about Roman history
- Specialist Groups: There are some groups of visitors for which you might want to arrange special programmes, for example visitors with physical or learning difficulties, who might need specific assistance in order to visit the displays or take part in organised sessions.
  - Further resources: Some museums might want to create an area in the museum with books, information sheets and a computer with online access for people who would like more information. If you have a numismatic library, you can allow access to your books in a reading room. Ensure that this is secure: it is important to treat your books like your objects so they cannot be stolen. Let people know about other assistance your museum provides such as coin identification.

Some useful ideas on educational programming can be found in:

- John Orna-Ornstein, 'Coins are Small and Boring: The Importance of an Education Programme for a Numismatic Collection' in *Proceedings of the 8th Meeting of the International Committee of Money and Banking Museums (ICOMON), Barcelona, 2001* (Barcelona : Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, 2003) pp.96-102 <http://www.icomon.org/en/meetings/611/barcelona-2001>
- Rasanubari Asmaramah, 'Money Museum: Social Challenges through Outreach Programs' in *Proceedings of the 8th Meeting of the International Committee of Money and Banking Museums (ICOMON), Barcelona, 2001* (Barcelona : Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, 2003) pp.108-11 <http://www.icomon.org/en/meetings/611/barcelona-2001>

## APPENDIX – Examples of Family/ school trails

THE  
BRITISH  
MUSEUM



# MINTED! Family Trail

The exhibition *Designing Change* (Gallery 69a) is about Britain's new coin designs. You might even have seen some of these in the money you are using at the moment.

- \* This trail will take you around the money galleries at the British Museum, to find out more about your new coins.
- \* You can also handle genuine ancient coins, that people in Britain used hundreds or even thousands of years ago.

**PLUS:** At the end, you can enter our competition to win the Royal Mint's All Change Collectors Pack, to help you collect your own set of the new coins

**Remember – the museum staff are here to answer your questions! Just look for the people wearing name badges.**



Have fun!

**Start in Gallery 68 (The HSBC Money Gallery)**

## Why do we put pictures on coins?

The designs on the money we use tell us lots of different things.

- **How much** the coins (or notes) we use are worth.
- **Who made them** and **where they are used**.
- They might have images of the **ruler** of that place.

People use the designs on their money to remind them of things that are important to them. These designs often include **national symbols**, such as special plants or animals, or famous buildings, coats of arms, or patron saints or gods of a city.

Explore the Money Gallery, and find and draw some of these different features. There are lots, but you could look for:

- A famous Roman building (Case 6)
- A man wearing a crown, in a boat (Case 11)
- An animal (Case 17)
- Britannia, who appears nowadays on a 50p (Case 15)

## Hands On Desk

Go to the Hands On Desk in the HSBC Money Gallery. Here you can look at and touch coins that people just like you have used in Britain throughout the centuries. Can you guess what people might have bought with them?

Some of the oldest coins are 2,000 years old. But you may also recognise some of them!

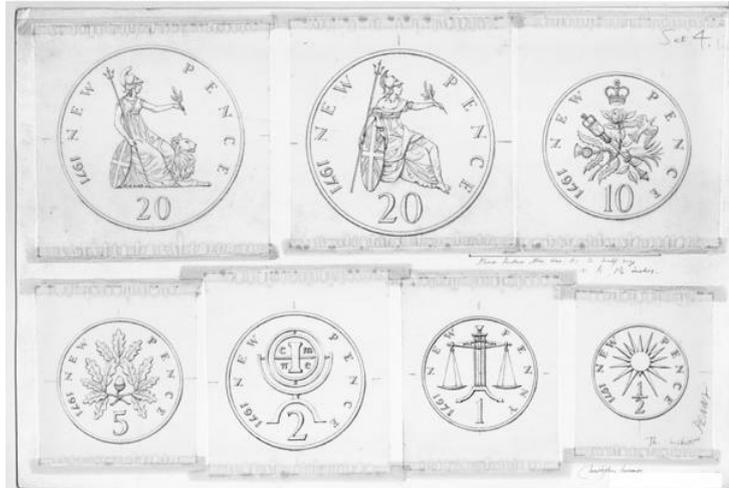
## Heads and Tails

### Go to Gallery 69a.

The portrait on our coins today is Queen Elizabeth II. Look at the portraits of the queen in the central case. How are they different from each other?

- Can you see where the artists who made the models have put their initials? Can you see their tiny initials on your own coins?

The long case on the right side of the gallery has some sketches made by the man who designed some of the money we use today.



- Do you know why all these drawings have the date **1971**?
- Can you see some symbols that appear on the coins you use today? What about the other designs, that **DON'T** appear on your coins? What do you think they mean? **CLUE:** The gyroscope (on the 2p) represents scientific progress. What about the others?

**Remember – you can ask members of staff (with name badges) if you have any questions.**

Turn over...

## Making money

Look at the six smaller cases on the right hand side of the gallery. These show the different stages of making coins.

The Royal Mint had a competition to choose the designs for the new coins. The first case shows some drawings that people entered.

Think about what you would put on your coin, if you ever made one:

- Who would you put on the obverse (the 'heads' side)?
- What would you like to see on the reverse (the 'tails')?
- Is there a motto you would like to put around the edge?

### Design a 50p coin for the London 2012 Olympic Games!

The Royal Mint is currently running competitions to design 50p coins in celebration of the Olympic Games, for three age groups:

- Ages 6 – 12 years, in association with Blue Peter
- For secondary school and college students aged 13 – 19 years
- A national competition for everyone over 13 years old

More information about all three competitions, details of how to enter and terms and conditions can all be found at:

the Royal Mint's website, <http://www.royalmintcompetition.co.uk/registration.aspx>

and the Blue Peter website, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/cbbc/bluepeter/central/getinvolved/index\\_competitions.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/cbbc/bluepeter/central/getinvolved/index_competitions.shtml)

### Finally, IT'S COMPETITION TIME!

In the last case in Gallery 69a there is a container filled with lots of the shiny new coins. Guess how much is in the container (in pounds and pence) – the nearest three guesses will receive a prize!

Fill in the slip that came with this trail, and hand it to staff in the gallery, by 4.00pm on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> February 2009.