Object entry

Definition

Logging all objects coming into your care for whatever reason, including loans, enquiries and potential acquisitions.

Scope

This procedure provides a receipt for objects left with you, sets out your terms for accepting responsibility, gives the object an identifying number, and captures key information right away. It is especially important if you accept enquiries and potential acquisitions at the front desk and someone else will follow up later. Anyone who might receive an object in this way should know what to do and how to record the information you need.

You should take the same care of all objects you are responsible for, whether or not they belong to your museum. You might be held liable if you lose or damage such objects, even if you did not ask for them to be left with you (eg they arrive unexpectedly in the post). You need to record their arrival before you decide what to do with them.

In this procedure we use the term 'owner' to mean the person depositing the object with you, but this will not always be the case. If the depositor is someone else, make sure they have authority to act on the owner's behalf.

This is a Spectrum primary procedure. UK museums must meet the standard set out below to fulfil the requirements of the Museum Accreditation Scheme.

The Spectrum standard

You should have a **policy** on why and how you receive objects and other material such as associated archives. This could either be a standalone document or part of a wider collections management policy. Either way, in deciding your policy you will most likely need to consider these questions:

- In what circumstances will you accept objects into your care?
- Who is authorised to do this?
- What are your terms and conditions for accepting deposited objects?
- How long, and in what form, is enquiry information held?

You should also have a written **procedure** that explains the steps to follow when objects arrive at your museum. Spectrum's suggested procedure is a useful starting point, but however you do it, your own procedure should meet the following minimum requirements:

Minimum requirement	Why this is important
You can account for all objects left in your care.	You do not lose track of objects left with you for a short time as enquiries.
You have clear terms and conditions for accepting objects into your care.	You do not end up being responsible for unwanted objects.
You record why objects have been left with you.	You do not wrongly process a loan as an acquisition.
You schedule the default return of objects to the owner if they are not to be acquired or loaned.	You can plan for the return of objects. You do not end up looking after objects whose status is unclear.
You record who legally owns objects left with you.	You can deal with the right person if you want to acquire an object and obtain legal title to it.
You assess and mitigate any potential risks to people or other objects from incoming objects.	You can quarantine items potentially infested with pests that could damage your existing collections.
You record as much significant information about newly-arrived objects as you can, to be added to in the future.	You do not lose the opportunity to find out about provenance or likely copyright holders while their owner is in your museum and ready to talk.
Both you and owners know your liability for loss or damage while objects are in your care.	Owners are aware of the limits of any claim they may make if anything goes wrong. You do not take on liabilities that might create financial risks.
You provide a receipt for owners and get a signature to show they accept your terms and conditions.	It is clear to owners that you have accepted care of objects they have left with you. Owners cannot later claim they did not accept your terms and conditions.
You can uniquely identify newly-arrived objects.	You do not mix up objects that look similar.

Suggested procedure

Preparing for object entry (if known in advance)

Prepare for the arrival of the objects at your museum.

You will often use this procedure during the course of other, linked procedures, particularly:

- ***Acquisition and accessioning***.
- ***Loans in (borrowing objects)***.

Preparing for the arrival of acquisitions or loans you are expecting might be as simple as briefing the people who will be involved in the procedure and making sure suitable storage space is available. In the case of archaeological archives and material from other fieldwork, preparations may start several years before the objects arrive. See **Note 1**.

If you need to arrange transport for the objects go to ***Location and movement control***.

If you need to update your insurance and indemnity cover go to ***Insurance and indemnity***.

Creating an entry record and receipt

Make a record of the objects as soon as they arrive.

See **Note 2** for information about what form your object entry records should take. Record the following information as needed. See **Note 3** for guidance on what to do with large groups of items.

Loan in information (if relevant)

- If a ***Loan in reference number*** has been allocated, record this on the entry form (if not use the ***Entry number***).

Object identification information

- ***Brief description*** of the objects, including any accompanying information (eg production or usage).

Object description information

- Brief statement of condition and completeness (identify the composite parts of objects which might appear as one thing) - ***Condition note*** and ***Completeness note***.

Object entry information

- ***Entry number*** (unless a ***Loan in reference number*** has been allocated).
- Name and address details of the current owner:

    - ***Current owner*** (use a standard form of name).
    - ***Address***.
- Name and address details of the depositor (if they are not the owner):
    - ***Depositor*** (use a standard form of name).
    - ***Address***.
- ***Entry date*** (use a standard format).
- ***Entry reason*** (use a standard term source).
- ***Entry method*** (use a standard term source).
- Requirements of the owner (or depositor) including return details and confidentiality of information provided to you - ***Depositor's requirements***.
- Note of packing materials if necessary (they may be an integral part of the object) - ***Packing note***.
- Agreed ***Return date*** (use a standard format).
- Signature of the owner (or depositor if different).
- Name and signature of the person who receives the object - ***Entry manager*** (use a standard form of name).
- Other significant information - ***Entry note***. This might include:
    - Insurance details (including a previously agreed valuation).
    - Field collection information where relevant (method, context, co-ordinates, finder).
    - A hazards note (eg chemical, radioactive).
    - Any legal/licence requirements (eg a firearms licence).
    - Any associated rights (eg copyright). See ***Rights management***.
    - The owner's asking price if it is being offered for sale.

Check and note the objects' condition, and any associated risks.

Go to ***Condition checking and technical assessment*** (and, since it is useful to take photographs, from there to ***Reproduction***) and back. Sometimes a more thorough condition report may be necessary, and often an assessment of risks to people (eg asbestos) or other objects (eg from insect pests or mould spores). Objects that pose potential risks may need to be quarantined. See **Note 4**.

Give (or send) the owner a copy of the entry record.

- If the owner is present go through your terms and conditions for receiving the objects into your care (see **Note 5**), and get their signature to confirm their acceptance of these. Give them a copy of the entry record as a receipt (usually one copy of a triplicate object entry form).
- If the owner is not present, but known, send them a copy of the entry record as a receipt and ask for a copy to be signed and returned. See **Note 6**.

- If the owner is not known (eg if objects are left or posted anonymously) record as much detail as possible, including photographs. Include a note to say the depositor was not available to verify details.

Processing newly-arrived objects

Tag the objects with a temporary label marked with the *Entry number* or *Loan in reference number*.

If the object is in pieces, or cannot easily be tagged, place it in a container and tag the container.

Record the first location of the objects.

Go to and return from ***Location and movement control***.

If the objects are planned acquisitions or incoming loans, return to the relevant procedure.

Go back to the linked procedures that may have triggered ***Object entry***:

- ***Acquisition and accessioning***.
- ***Loans in (borrowing objects)***.

If objects arrive unexpectedly and are offered for acquisition, consider this offer.

Go to ***Acquisition and accessioning*** and consider whether you want to acquire the objects or not. Either way, stay in that procedure and complete it.

If an owner leaves objects for identification, carry this out within the agreed time.

Inform the owner of the result and then return the objects using the ***Object exit*** procedure.

If objects arrive anonymously, deal with them according to your object entry policy.

If you might want to consider acquiring objects left with you anonymously, go to ***Acquisition and accessioning*** and work through that procedure.

If you do not want to acquire them, go to ***Deaccessioning and disposal*** and dispose of the objects in line with your policy.

Guidance notes

Note 1: Material from archaeological investigations or other types of fieldwork

Making arrangements to receive archaeological archives (eg when the archaeologists have finished researching excavated material) or other kinds of fieldwork (eg natural science expeditions) can potentially be complicated and need to be negotiated years in advance of the material arriving at your museum. For guidance on the issues involved and recommended standards see relevant resources listed under this procedure on the Collections Trust website.

Note 2: Object entry records

Information for ***Object entry*** is usually managed on paper, rather than digitally, as it requires signatures and receipts. Records can be:

- Object entry forms.
- Object entry files.
- Day books.

Object entry forms

Pre-printed object entry forms are available from the Collections Trust. These carbonless forms are available either from stock, or pre-numbered and overprinted with your organisation's name and address. They are printed on the reverse with standard terms and conditions for deposit. The forms are in triplicate:

- The top (white) copy of the form should be filed immediately into an 'entry file', where it serves as your master record.
- The second (pink) part of the form should be given to the depositor as a receipt for the objects. This part of the form should be presented when items are returned to the owner/depositor.
- The third (blue) part of the form should be kept with the deposited objects.

Object entry file

The object entry file contains your master copy of deposited object information, filed in numerical order, with no gaps in the sequence. If you are using Collections Trust forms, this file will contain the white copies of the form, which carry the original signature of the owner/depositor. The object entry file is an important archive and should be kept safe. It should be clear from the file which objects have entered your premises and what eventually happened to them.

Day books

Some organisations use a book, usually known as a 'day book' or 'entry book', which usually records the date, the object, the name and address of the depositor, and the owner or depositor's signature. (Note that the day book is not an accession register, which is used to formally record the acquisitions into your long-term collection.)

Using only a day book to record object entry does not meet Spectrum standards as it does not provide a receipt for the depositor or set out terms and conditions of deposit. If you are using a day book to manage your ***Object entry*** procedure, you will need to use it in conjunction with triplicate object entry forms which provide a receipt for the depositor.

Note 3: Large groups of items

If it is not possible to count the number of objects deposited, such as in the case of a large number of pot sherds, indicate the size of the deposit in an appropriately practical way (eg 2 boxes). In this instance, it will be appropriate to assign numbers to groups of objects rather than individual items. Thought should also be given to the different levels of recording appropriate; a summary list, rather than an itemised list of specimens, may be all that is immediately required, or indeed feasible.

Note 4: Condition checking

It is particularly important to check the condition of the object at the time of deposit. This will establish the original condition of the object in the case of any claims against you by the owner.

The condition report should be appropriate to the circumstances. Make a brief note of the condition as required (eg small crack on base, stain on back). Photograph the object wherever practicable. In some cases, a more comprehensive condition report may be necessary.

If appropriate, a risk assessment should also be carried out. This should consider risks to people (eg from hazardous materials such as asbestos) and risks to other objects (eg from pest infestations). In particular, objects including organic material should go straight into a designated quarantine area, which must be physically isolated from collection stores and exhibition galleries. Quarantined objects should be checked for any signs of infestation, potentially over the several months it can take for some larvae to emerge as adult insects. Infested objects should be further isolated by bagging, clearly labelled as having an active pest, and treated as soon as possible.

Objects should only be accepted unexamined if they require unpacking by specialists. In such cases the receipt should state that the objects were received unexamined.

Note 5: Terms and conditions

Terms and conditions for deposited objects are especially important. They should include the following:

- A statement of the care and responsibility that will be taken by you.
- A disclaimer of liability.
- A declaration of the right to dispose of objects not collected by an agreed date.
- A disclaimer concerning opinions on objects.

- A refusal to give valuations.
- For a proposed acquisition, a statement about the current ownership status of the objects.
- In all cases, a timescale for any action.

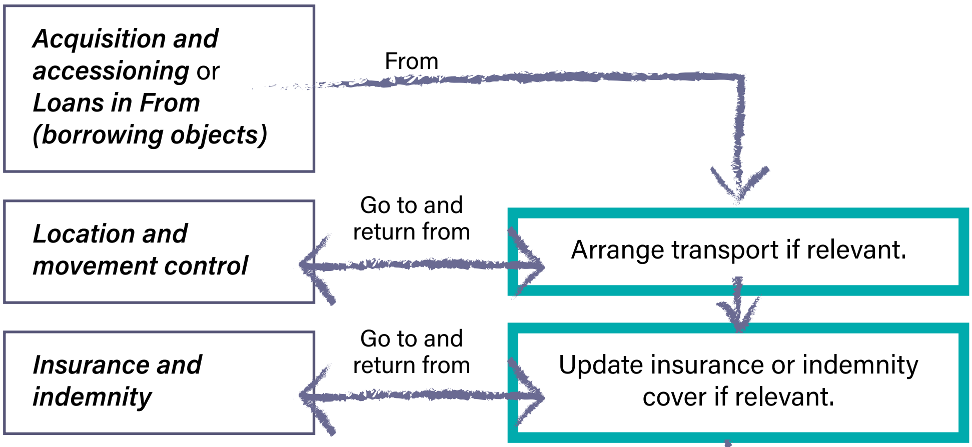
Always consult your normal source of legal advice when establishing terms and conditions of deposit, or if there is any doubt as to the ownership or legal status of an object.

Note 6: When the depositor is not the owner

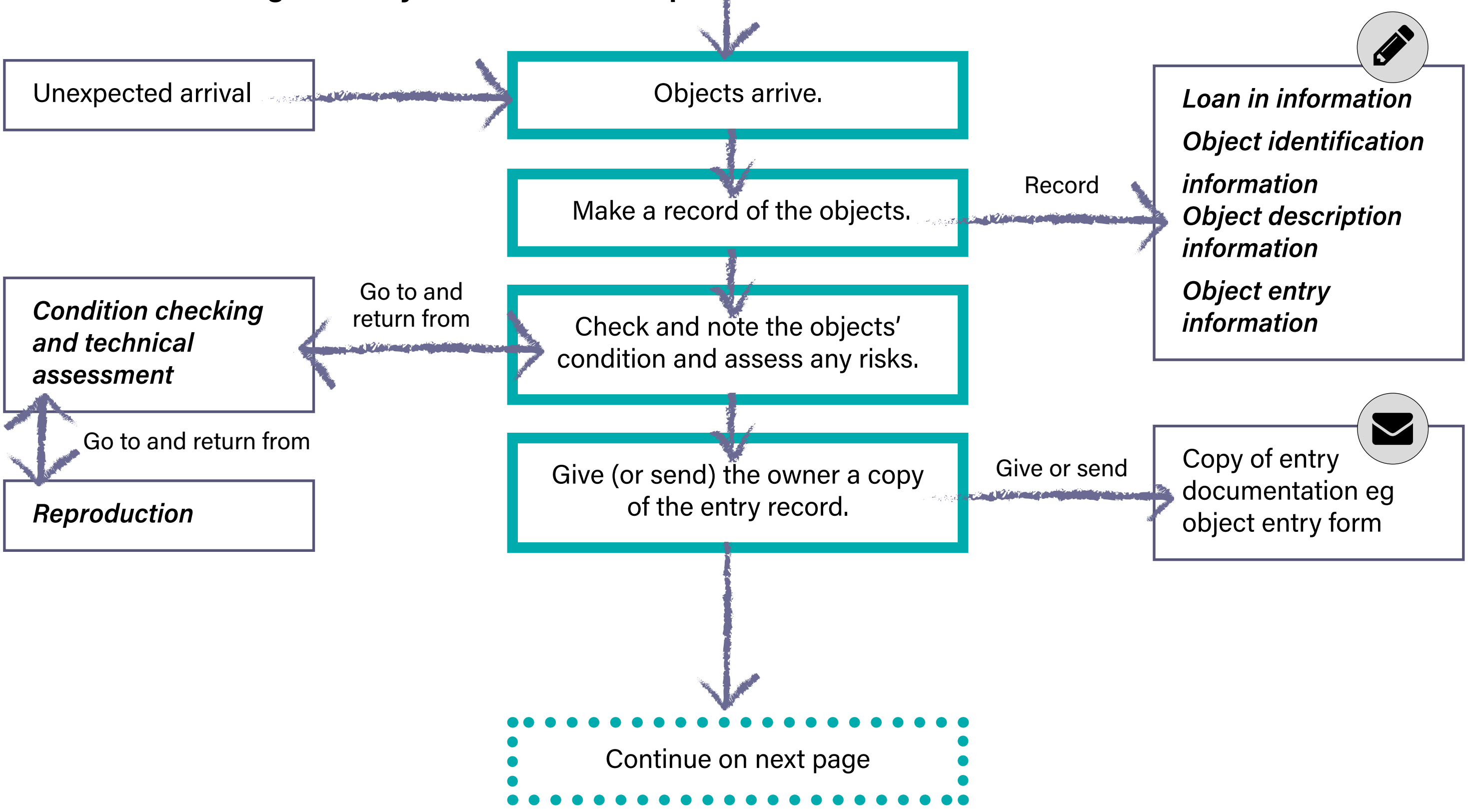
If the depositor is not the owner of the object, and especially if it is being offered as a gift or for sale, the depositor should sign to confirm that they have the authority to offer the object. The preferred method of doing this would be to have a signed statement from the owner, confirming that the depositor is acting on his or her behalf. It is important that the owner is contactable in case you later want to acquire the objects.

Object entry

Preparing for object entry (if known in advance)



Creating an entry record and receipt



Processing newly arrived objects