Collections Access Policy 2025-2030

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1 Introduction

The Collections Access Policy sets a framework for enabling and managing access to and engagement with the Cathedral's historic collections. It sets out the Cathedral's commitment to offering the widest possible access to collections whilst managing associated risks, in line with professional standards.

The general accessibility of the Cathedral and precincts falls outside the scope of this policy.

It will be published and reviewed on a five-year cycle and will be supported by a five-year plan.

Canterbury Cathedral is a place of worship, the seat of the Archbishop of Canterbury and part of a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The Cathedral's mission statement is 'Inspiring life in all its fullness'.

The Cathedral's Collections Management Policy Statement is the following:
Canterbury Cathedral cares for, develops and makes accessible its historic collections in order to support its charitable purposes, mission and strategic objectives, managing the historic collections as a resource to enhance worship, understanding, learning and inspiration.

Summary of the collections can be found in the Collections Management Policy Statement and on the Cathedral's website.

2 Scope

The Collections Access Policy applies to all historic collections held by the Cathedral, whether owned or on loan, whether analogue or digital. This policy assumes that some items currently in the historic

collections and on the Statutory Inventory are not suitable for public access, being in precincts residences, offices or inaccessible storage (such as the triforium), or being of insufficient public interest.

The policy applies to onsite visitors, including visitors to the Cathedral and to the Archives Reading Room, as well as remote audiences.

The Chapter and the Fabric Advisory Committee have approved this policy. The Senior Leadership Team is responsible to Chapter for compliance with this policy.

3 Aim of policy

The Cathedral seeks to deliver against its Strategic Plan 2025-2035 and the values which it outlines, which are Compassion, Collaboration, Commitment and Curiosity.

The aims in collections access linked to these values are:

- Compassion: we will open up access to the historic collections entrusted to our keeping, and tell the stories enshrined within them
- Collaboration: we will work widely with those interested in the exploration of our historic collections, seeking joint working and funding opportunities
- Commitment: we are committed to sharing our historic collections with current and future generations
- Curiosity: we will exploit our historic collections to tell their stories for current and future generations, promoting the collections as a source of inspiration and learning

4 Policy statements

The Cathedral will:

- offer the widest access possible to collections, balancing this with the needs of collections care and any necessary access restrictions (eg Data Protection and privacy concerns)
- aim to enrich people's lives through engaging with the collections
- develop learning materials based on the collections, suitable for a range of learning styles and access needs
- assess barriers to accessing collections, including physical and intellectual, and seek to address them
- act in the interests of owners of collections on loan
- deliver high qualities of customer care
- develop and expand remote access provision
- provide volunteering opportunities for working with the collections

5 Application of policy

5.1 General

In order to preserve the Cathedral and maintain its work, admission is chargeable other than for worship. Those living or working in the city, local students, those on universal credit and those with a valid Application Registration Card can visit without charge.

Collections can be accessed in the following ways:

- onsite, including through displays and exhibitions
- guided tours

- programme of talks, workshops and activities
- school visits
- further and higher education visits
- use of liturgical collections in worship
- collections study and research access
- enquiry service
- publications
- on-line access to collections catalogues, descriptions and images
- social media posts
- loans out from the collections

There are three display areas within the Cathedral which feature examples from the historic collections: in the Crypt, Water Tower and Viewing Gallery. All have step-free access. Photography is permitted, although photography for commercial purposes needs to be arranged in advance. Tours of the Cathedral in British Sign Language, and tours for people with a visual impairment and step-free tours can be arranged. The media guide has options for BSL and audio descriptions. Noise-cancelling headphones can also be borrowed.

5.2 Access assessments

The following barriers to access to our collections can be identified:

- Physical access in buildings. The Trinity Chapel is inaccessible for wheelchair users because of historic steps. We will develop and maintain digital access to items in the historic collections in that space.
- Collections in storage. Only a very small percentage of our historic collections is on display within the Cathedral. We will aim to provide access to digital surrogates of key collections whenever possible.
- Geographical. Many with an interest in our collections are not able to travel to Canterbury; we will aim to provide access to digital surrogates whenever possible.
- Sensory needs. We will aim to accommodate visitors with additional support needs, including impaired vision or hearing or neurodiversity, to access the collections.
- Range of learning styles. We will aim to provide a range of interpretation to accommodate a range of learning styles and knowledge and experience.
- Cultural. We will aim to provide interpretation to meet the needs of visitors without English as a first language or with limited knowledge of British and Christian heritage.

5.3 Archives and Library

Access to the Reading Room is free of charge for individual researchers, and the precincts admission charge is not payable if they do not visit the Cathedral. Specialist research access to objects from the historic collections can be facilitated in the Reading Room.

Group visits are chargeable; regular university seminars are hosted. There are charges for copying, photography permits and research services.

Researchers will be asked to use surrogates (eg microfilm or digitised images) when available, in the interests of the preservation of the originals.

Information about Archives and Library collections is available through online catalogues hosted by the Cathedral. Information about, and images from, from some collections is available on partner websites, for instance Findmypast for parish records (indexed) and ArtUK for paintings. We will aim to develop online resources and increase the accessibility of catalogue information.

Access to items may be restricted because of:

- Data Protection
- privacy and confidentiality
- physical fragility of items
- exemptions under Freedom of Information (local government records only)
- incomplete cataloguing
- copyright

5.4 Loans from the collections

Loans from the collections to exhibitions in other institutions supports the objective of making items accessible to wider audiences. Loans will be managed according to our Loans Policy.

Appendix: Related legislation, standards, codes of ethics and guidance

Please also see the Collections Management Policy Statement.

Legislation

- Care of Cathedrals Measure 2011
- Equality Act 2010
- Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988
- Data Protection Legislation
- Public Records Act 1958, as amended 1967
- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- The Environmental Information Regulations 2004
- The Manorial Documents Rules 1959, amended 1963 and 1967
- The Tithe (Copies of Instruments of Apportionments) Rules 1960, amended 1963

Standards

- PAS 197:2009 Code of practice for cultural collections management (2009)
- Archive Service Accreditation Standard
- Museums Accreditation Standard
- SPECTRUM Standard

Codes of ethics

- ICON
- International Council of Museums
- Archives and Records Association
- Museums Association

Guidance

Produced by:

- Historic England
- ICON
- The Archives and Records Association
- The British Library
- The Collections Trust

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