Access Policy

Pitt Rivers Museum Policy and Planning Committee, February 2015

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

PittRivers MUSEUM

Contents

Access Policy
Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford

Governing body: The Visitors of the Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford.
Date approved by governing body: 20 April 2015 (via circulation)
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Pitt Rivers Museum Mission
"The Pitt Rivers Museum aspires to be the best university museum of anthropology and archaeology in the world, using its unique galleries as a focus for exemplary teaching and research and as an inspirational forum for the sharing of cultural knowledge amongst the widest possible public."

Oxford University Museums Partnership Mission
"From our position at the heart of the University, our vision is for Oxford University Museums to pioneer ways of developing and sharing knowledge and expertise so that everyone, wherever they are in the world, can engage with and find inspiration through our collections, activities and scholarship. We will establish ourselves as resilient leaders, delivering innovative programmes to diverse audiences, and nurturing dynamic partnerships within the University, the sector and with the public."

## 1	Purpose of this policy

The purpose of this policy is to provide a framework for maintaining and improving access to the Museum's buildings, facilities, displays, collections, associated information, staff and knowledge. It does so by addressing the physical, sensory, cultural, intellectual, attitudinal and financial barriers to access with the overall aim of achieving equality, diversity and inclusion. It aims to create unique opportunities for audiences to learn actively through self-motivated discovery. Learning may take the form of an increase or change in skills, knowledge, understanding, values, feelings, attitudes or capacity to reflect. This policy also covers access considerations for staff, as detailed in the Museum's Building Management Plan.

The strategies for improving access are identified in the Museum's Forward Plan 2015-2020 and the Oxford University Museums Partnership Business Plan 2015-18. This policy aims to support Oxford University's remit for public engagement as specified in the University's Strategic Plan 2013-2018, the requirements of Arts Council England (ACE) as defined in their five strategic goals for museums and the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) Verve Project Activities Plan 2013-18.

## 2	Access assessment

The Museum's Disability Policy and Action Plan was updated in 2015. The Action Plan was produced as part of an audit by the University of Oxford's Equality and Diversity Unit and a

small focus group. The Museum has a procedural document on *Display, Labelling and Access* that is regularly updated, *Social Media Guidelines* for staff, and a *Learning Plan* last updated in 2015. Regular surveys are carried out with users and non-users including an onsite visitor survey kiosk. We segment our audiences using ACORN in partnership with Oxford University Widening Participation and participate in the ACE Visitor Finder scheme. Focus groups are run with a range of audiences; these include teachers, families, young people and adults. Recently we have worked with external consultants to run focus groups improving the access and discoverability of online resources. The Museum regularly consults a steering group comprising volunteers, teachers, local cultural organisations and teenagers. The Museum regularly consults with the University of Oxford's Disability Advisory Service and the Equality and Diversity Unit. Projects and programmes are evaluated using both qualitative and quantitative methods as appropriate.

3   Stakeholders

Stakeholders include online audiences, local, national and international visitors, source communities, academics, researchers, artists, families, students in education of all ages, teachers, life-long learners, volunteers and staff. Stakeholders also include Oxford University, Oxford University Museums and Collections (OUMC), the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), ACE, HLF and other museum professionals.

4   Types of access

4.1   Physical – the building and its public amenities

4.1.1   The Museum is accessible for wheelchairs and buggies.

4.1.2   There are wheelchair accessible toilets, baby changing facilities, seating and disabled parking.

4.1.3   Wheelchairs are available on request, including an electric scooter.

4.1.4   There are two onsite lifts providing entry from the Museum of Natural History and access to all levels.

4.1.5   There is a highlights trail designed specifically for wheelchair users.

4.1.6   The Museum supports the Health and Wellbeing agenda.

4.1.7   Events and workshops are accessible to people with a range of needs.

4.1.8   There is an online downloadable access booklet available with pre-visit advice for a range of visitors.

4.1.9   There is a range of Museum resources available online for those who cannot physically visit the collections themselves. The Museum is also active on several mainstream social media platforms.

4.1.10 The Museum is committed to continuing to provide an accessible web presence that gives online visitors full access to its digital resources.

4.1.11 Free gallery plans are available.

4.1.12 The Museum is an equal opportunities employer and is committed to providing appropriate adapted or additional equipment or workspaces for staff (see the Oxford University Equality and Diversity Policy).

4.2   *Sensory – for those with impaired sight or hearing*

4.2.1   Large print interpretation is available for most temporary exhibitions and printed introduction guides are available on selected subjects.

4.2.2   Audio guides are available.

4.2.3   Audio loops are fitted in some areas.

4.2.4   There is adjustable lighting available in the lecture theatre and seminar room.

4.2.5   The Museum has an extensive handling collection for use with group visits and outreach.

4.2.6   Free public Wi-Fi is available throughout the Museum.

4.3   *Cultural – the diversity of audiences and employees*

4.3.1   The Museum ensures that the presentation of displays and the language used to describe collections (both written and oral) respect a diversity of backgrounds.

4.3.2   The Museum responds to the needs and sensitivities of audiences from diverse cultural backgrounds, including source communities, inviting contributions to the interpretation of the collections and the understanding of their cultural significance.

4.3.3   The Museum displays the collections in ways that respect the Museum's origins while enhancing the quality of visit (both physical and digital) through improved interpretation and service provision.

4.3.4   Introductory information is available in a range of local languages including Bengali, Hindi, Polish, Punjabi, Urdu and Chinese.

4.3.5   The Museum aims to attract new stakeholders from non-user groups through developing new activities, programmes and outreach activities.

4.3.6   Learning programmes and resources will be devised using ACE's five strategic goals.

The Museum offers free online access to information and images of more than 400,000 objects (approximately 80% of the collection), film, sound and manuscript collections. The Museum is committed to the continuing digitisation of the remainder of the collections.

4.3.7   The Museum aims to recruit an able and diverse workforce. This process is monitored through the University.

4.4   *Intellectual – provision relating to a variety of learning styles and abilities*

4.4.1   Users have different needs and the Museum is committed to an inclusive approach that recognises a range of different learning styles.

4.4.2   Public programming utilises a wide range of approaches appropriate to particular audiences. These include online and downloadable resources, print and digital marketing, learning resources, guided tours, hands-on practical workshops, facilitated sessions, outreach, lectures and public talks, access to reserve collections, research facilities, loans to other organisations, temporary exhibitions and behind-the-scenes tours.

4.4.3   Where practicable the Museum aims to tailor workshops to people with a range of abilities, including those with special educational needs.

4.4.4   The Museum uses its collections and expertise as a springboard for inspirational learning and creativity, and to promote the public understanding of anthropology and archaeology.

4.4.5   The Museum offers opportunities to schools, colleges, community groups and artists to respond to the collection through a variety of creative practice.

4.4.6   The Museum aims to make a range of interpretation available appropriate to a university museum (see Interpretation Guidelines). This includes labels and panels, printed guides and catalogues, online collections databases, oral recordings, films and sound archives, spoken-word audio guides, activity backpacks, information maps, trails, digital applications, online resources, plus a range of special events.

4.4.7   The Museum is a centre for world-class teaching and research in visual, material and museum anthropology.

4.4.8   The Museum continues to publish leading research related to the collections.

4.4.9   The Museum aims provide the public with insights into the Museum's processes and working procedures e.g. tours, videos, takeover events, career advice, blogs and the sharing of best practice.

4.4.10 The Museum aims to support students from Oxford University and accepts placements from other higher education institutions.

4.4.11 The Museum is committed to an active involvement in the training of future museum professionals through work experience, placements and recognised internships.

4.5   *Attitudinal – supporting engagement from non-traditional museum users*

4.5.1   The Museum creates a safe environment by implementing the University's Health and Safety Policy and through the training of its staff, including risk assessments and Disclosure and Barring Service checks when relevant.

4.5.2   All members of staff receive disability awareness training. Induction for staff with public-facing roles includes access issues.

4.5.3   All front-facing members of staff have appropriate training in customer care and an awareness of the possible barriers and access issues associated with Museum visits. The Museum encourages an awareness in all staff of the Museum's public role.

4.5.4   Members of staff aim to be excellent guardians of the Museum's collections, adding to them appropriately, and ensuring that they are conserved and documented to the highest standards.

4.5.5   Museum staff support colleagues in other museums through the dissemination of best practice and a range of training and development opportunities.

4.5.6   The Museum seeks opportunities to work in partnership with other organisations to ensure better outcomes and continuing social relevance.

4.5.7   Pitt Rivers Museum education staff are actively involved in running a coordinated learning team across Oxford University Museums and Collections (OUMC).

4.5.8   The education team works in conjunction with the Oxford University Museums Community Outreach Service which makes 200 visits a year to groups that would not or could not otherwise access the Museum's collections through Museum-based workshops and workshops in the community.

4.5.9   The Museum works with the Oxford University Museums Volunteer Service to recruit for volunteer opportunities through an open and inclusive recruitment system.

4.5.10 The Museum welcomes research visits to view collections off display by appointment, if suitable resources and supervision is available.

4.6   *Financial – recognising that people of all income levels visit the museum*

4.6.1   Admission to the Museum is free and it is open seven days a week.

4.6.2   The Museum encourages donations from all visitors but will continue to offer free services to target groups (see Learning Plan 2015-18). Any income generated by these activities is reinvested into the Museum.

4.6.3   Museum staff accept their responsibility to manage the Museum's resources responsibly.

4.6.4   The Museum operates both retail and commercial activities that are Museum- and visitor-appropriate.

5   Limitations

5.1   The Museum is a Grade 1 listed building and its cases and displays are of historic significance (see the Pitt Rivers Museum Conservation Plan 2012 prepared by Oxford University Estates Services).

5.2   Access to the collections is balanced against the need for security and a duty of care for the collections (see Collections Care and Conservation Policy 2015).

5.3   Access is sometimes constrained by the necessity to work within available resources and financial limitations.

5.4   In providing access, account will be taken of known cultural sensitivities and the opinion of source communities.

5.5   Access to human remains in the collection will only be allowed in compliance with the recommendations of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport's (DCMS) Guidance for the Care of Human Remains, 2005.

5.6   Some of the Museum's offsite stores are not accessible to wheelchairs.

5.7   Light levels are kept low for conservation reasons, but torches and magnifying glasses are available on request.

5.8   Due to the historic arrangement of cases some areas of the ground floor are not accessible to wheelchairs.

5.9   The dense arrangement of the collections on display limits the level of interpretation in some instances.

5.10   The Museum may charge for the use of some spaces and events.

6   Monitoring progress

6.1   The Museum's Access Committee is the main forum in which access, learning, and audience development issues are discussed and taken forward within the Museum's

formal committee structure. Proposals and points for dissemination from this meeting are taken forward to the Museum's senior management committee.

6.2   All types of provision will be evaluated on an on-going basis. Evaluation will be carried out within the frameworks outlined in ACE's Seven Quality Principles, Museums Change Lives (Museums Association), HLF advice notes and the Inspiring Learning for All framework.

6.3   The results of evaluations will be analysed and conclusions disseminated to staff. When possible new activities will include formative evaluation and take into account responses to visitor focus groups, audience surveys and audience responses. School sessions will be developed through consultation with teachers and students, and evaluation of on-going sessions.

6.4   Visitor feedback is sought through self-completion questionnaires at a digital kiosk in the galleries and from a comments book.

6.5   All group visits are recorded and the data analysed on an annual basis.

6.6   Data from evaluation and monitoring are used to shape the Museum's forward planning.

7   Legal framework

The Museum works within the relevant legal framework. In particular this is the Copyright, Design and Patents Act 1988, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, the Data Protection Act 1998, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Child Protection Act, the Equality Act 2010 and the DCMS Guidance for the Care of Human Remains 2005.

8   Policy publication and review procedure

This Policy will be published on the Museum's website (www.prm.ox.ac.uk/governance.html), and will be made available for visitors to the Museum to view on request. It will be reviewed from time to time, and at least every five years. Funders and other key stakeholders will be notified of any changes to the Museum's Access Policy, and the implications of any such changes for the Museum's activities.