



Collections Development Policy

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Name of museum: The Centre for Computing History (hereby referred to as 'The Centre' or 'CCH')

Name of governing body: Trustees of The Centre for Computing History.

Policy review procedure: The collections development policy will be published and reviewed at least once every five years.

Arts Council England will be notified of any changes to the collections development policy, and the implications of any such changes for the future of collections.

1. Relationship to other relevant policies/plans of the organisation:

1.1. The museum's statement of purpose is as follows:

The Centre for Computing History was established as an educational charity to tell the story of the Information Age through exploring the historical, social and cultural impact of developments in computing. It maintains a long-term collection of objects to tell this story and exploits them through education and events programmes.

- 1.2. The governing body will ensure that both acquisition and disposal are carried out openly and with transparency.
- 1.3. By definition, the Centre has a long-term purpose and holds collections in trust for the benefit of the public in relation to its stated objectives. The governing body therefore accepts the principle that sound curatorial reasons must be established before consideration is given to any acquisition to the collection, or the disposal of any items in the Centre's collection.
- 1.4. Acquisitions outside the current stated policy will only be made in exceptional circumstances.
- 1.5. The Centre recognises its responsibility, when acquiring additions to its collections, to ensure that care of collections, documentation arrangements and use of collections will meet the requirements of the Museum Accreditation Standard. This includes using SPECTRUM primary procedures for collections management. It will take into account limitations on collecting imposed by such factors as staffing, storage and care of collection arrangements.
- 1.6. The Centre will undertake due diligence and make every effort not to acquire, whether by purchase, gift, bequest or exchange, any object or specimen unless the governing body or responsible officer is satisfied that the Centre can acquire a valid title to the item in question.
- 1.7. In exceptional cases, disposal may be motivated principally by financial reasons. The method of disposal will therefore be by sale and the procedures outlined below will be followed. In cases where disposal is motivated by financial reasons,

the governing body will not undertake disposal unless it can be demonstrated that all the following exceptional circumstances are met in full:

- the disposal will significantly improve the long-term public benefit derived from the remaining collection;
- the disposal will not be undertaken to generate short-term revenue (for example to meet a budget deficit);
- the disposal will be undertaken as a last resort after other sources of funding have been thoroughly explored;
- extensive prior consultation with sector bodies has been undertaken;
- the item under consideration lies outside the Centre's established core collection.

2. History of the collections

CCH was founded in 2006 to take the private collection of the Director, Jason Fitzpatrick, into the public sphere. Appeals were made for donations and several thousand new objects have arrived into the Centre's care in the last decade.

In its first decade, CCH was taking in objects at a rate that can no longer be sustained due to storage considerations. At the time this pace was vital in order to give the organisation a diverse, engaging collection to work with. We are now in a position to be more discerning in what we take in. Careful management is needed to control the growth of the collection, and this Acquisitions and Disposals policy has been developed to assist with the task.

Since CCH focuses on having as many displays switched on as possible in order to better explain the history of computing to our visitors, many of our display items are duplicates of items in our properly recorded collection. We receive many donations of historic items that are not suitable for accessioning – such as vintage TVs and monitors – that we put to use in our displays.

Prior to 2018, when CCH applied for Accreditation and the first Collections Development policy was written, objects were divided into two collections. These collections were not formally defined, but instead emerged through practical use. These collections were:

- **Archived Collection:** this encompassed any item individually documented on our CMS, Sitewise. This was the formal collection available for review online by the public.
- **Handling Collection:** all other items in the care of CCH, including known items like common home computers on display (to spare our best Archived copies) and stock for external exhibitions, as well as large quantities of unsorted items forming our backlog.

To meet Accreditation standards, we have since created a third collection – the Accessioned Collection – which is detailed in the next section of this policy.

3. An overview of current collections

The collection at CCH includes computers, computer peripherals, electronic or mechanical computing devices, software, books and media. The collection also contains articles regarding the history of computing which can be in any of the following formats: hand-written manuscript, printed information, photographs, computer-generated items, records, and audio-visual materials, such as film, video, and digital and analogue recordings.

As of June 2022, the Archived Collection contains around 1,200 computers, 320 games consoles, 14,200 games, 4,500 software packages, 2,700 books and 10,000 magazines, amongst many other objects. Calculators in the collection date back to the 1920s, and the core computing collection from the 1950s. Our exhibits allow us to demonstrate the advance from paper tape to cloud storage, and from vacuum-tube systems to microscopic silicon chips. We also have displays focused on gaming, connectivity, and the social impact of computing. Areas of significance include our collection of Acorn Computing machines (which tell a story of importance both locally in Cambridgeshire and to the UK at large) and our extensive games archive.

As of March 2018, there are currently three collections at CCH:

- **Accessioned Collection:** these are the most important items in the museum's care and form our core long-term collection. New acquisitions will be accessioned if it is decided that it should join our long-term collection. Objects from the Archived Collection are being accessioned following a review of each item. Documentation for these items will be in line with SPECTRUM standards and all references to 'Accessioning' in CCH's policy apply to these items only. Accessioning a set number of new items into this collection is a goal in CCH's Documentation Plan.
- **Archived Collection:** the remainder of catalogued items in CCH's care that have been individually listed on our CMS, Sitewise. New acquisitions will no longer be entered into this collection, and as objects from the Archived Collection are being accessioned, this collection is slowly decreasing in size
- **Handling Collection:** all other items in the care of CCH. This includes items for use in our interactive displays, spares for parts and objects we loan out for external exhibitions.

The distinction between 'Accessioned' and 'Archived' collections has been made for two reasons:

- The 'archived' collection was built up prior to working towards Accreditation. It emerged from practical use from the objects that were documented on our in-house database, which were not documented in line with Spectrum standards. As a result

these objects were not collected with a collections structure in mind, or in line with a policy. They are therefore not considered accessioned. The museum is now going through the contents of the Archived collection and actively deciding whether to accession items from this collection. If objects are not suitable for accessioning or the handling collection, we are going through the formal deaccessioning process, following best practice.

- To give CCH time to become used to SPECTRUM procedures. For instance, instead of being tasked with numbering a backlog of 30,000+ items, we prioritise the numbering of Accessioned items. This will allow us to introduce best practice and apply these standards ever more thoroughly to items beyond the Accessioned Collection as we develop the resources and professional knowledge to do so. It is not the long-term plan to have three levels of collections but it will take time to place items from the Archived Collection into either the Accessioned Collection or Handling Collection.

Section 9 of this document outlines the process by which an object enters these collections.

4. Themes and priorities for future collecting

The priority with our collection is to consolidate what we already have by implementing core SPECTRUM procedures, upgrading our archive capacity and being far more selective with our acquisitions. Although the scope of our collecting is unaltered, the volume of items coming through must be reduced compared to previous years.

CCH will continue to collect in the areas it has already focused on. This includes:

- Electronic computing devices
- Electronic computing peripherals
- Mechanical computing devices
- Printed books, magazines, journals, pamphlets, advertising and promotional literature
- Software on any storage medium
- Sound recordings
- Photographic images
- Audio-visual materials, including film, video, DVD, and computer-generated images
- Manuscripts such as correspondence, diaries and notebooks (to include electronic archives)
- Published information in digital formats, such as CD-ROM.

CCH will collect passively by fielding the vast numbers of donations enquiries that we receive. We also actively collect through the Virtual Computer Collector (VCC) scheme that CCH set up. VCC encourages financial donations from passionate followers of the museum

and this money is put towards the improvement of our stores and the purchase of new items for our collections. Such items will almost certainly become part of the Accessioned Collection.

5. Themes and priorities for rationalisation and disposal

- 5.1 The Centre recognises that the principles on which priorities for rationalisation and disposal are determined will be through a formal review process that identifies which collections are included and excluded from the review. The outcome of review and any subsequent rationalisation will not reduce the quality or significance of the collection and will result in a more useable, well managed collection.
- 5.2 The procedures used will meet professional standards. The process will be documented, open and transparent. There will be clear communication with key stakeholders about the outcomes and the process.
- 5.3 Rationalisation is currently taking place in the handling collection and 'Archived' collection. It is our plan to grow the Accessioned Collection. Should this change, all clauses regarding rationalisation will be adhered to.

6. Legal and ethical framework for acquisition and disposal of items

- 6.1 The Centre recognises its responsibility to work within the parameters of the Museum Association Code of Ethics when considering acquisition and disposal.

7. Collecting policies of other museums

- 7.1. The Centre will take account of the collecting policies of other museums and other organisations collecting in the same or related areas or subject fields. It will consult with these organisations where conflicts of interest may arise or to define areas of specialism, in order to avoid unnecessary duplication and waste of resources.
- 7.2. Specific reference is made to the following museum(s)/organisation(s):

The National Museum of Computing, Bletchley, Milton Keynes
The Science Museum, London
Computer Conservation Society

8. Archival Holdings

Although the focus of CCH's collection is computing hardware and software, we do have extensive archival holdings. These come in the form of documentation, manuals, promotional material, magazines and more. A significant amount of this collection is in digital form, which is CCH's preferred form of storage. Our goal is to make as much of the archival collection available online as possible, taking into account copyright issues etc., in order to broaden access.

CCH's policy on magazines is only to collect issues of exceptional interest, as our collection already covers a vast range of titles from the last forty years. We will accept certain manuals and development documentation, and a decision to acquire such objects will be made much more likely if we have permission to publish them online. CCH may pursue individual documents that come to our attention, but we are not actively collecting in this area.

9. Acquisition

9.1. The policy for agreeing acquisitions is as follows:

9.1.1. The Centre will acquire objects by gift, purchase and bequest.

9.1.2. In case of gift and bequest, donors can specify whether they are donating an item to 1) the Accessioned Collection or 2) the Handling Collection.

9.1.3. CCH will reject donations when the donor and our intentions for the object conflict (i.e. the donor wishes it to be preserved, and the Centre wishes to use it for parts). We will also reject donations with additional donor-imposed caveats on the management of the items once in our care, such as restrictions on permission to loan or requirements that the objects be permanently displayed.

9.1.4. When new objects come into the Centre's ownership, they can be designated for one of three purposes: Accessioned Collection, Handling Collection, or disposal (see section 3).

9.1.4.1. Disposal covers disposal by destruction, sale, or another method. Items selected for disposal will typically be duplicate items that are of no use, or miscellaneous material included as part of a larger donation (wires, cables, etc.).

9.1.5. The path taken by each object is chosen by the Collections Committee, consisting of the Director/CEO, Collections Manager, Collections Officer and senior volunteers, with the Director/CEO having the final say. In the case of proposed acquisition by purchase, the Finance Officer will also be consulted prior to the purchase being made.

9.1.6. When deciding whether to acquire an object, consideration is given to the Centre's themes and priorities for future collecting (point 4), to the value the object could potentially offer to future generations, to the object's biography, and to the Centre's ability to adequately care for and preserve the object.

9.1.7. Further detail on the processes of logging and monitoring acquisitions can be found in the Centre's Documentation Procedural Manual.

9.2. The Centre will not acquire any object or specimen unless it is satisfied that the object or specimen has not been acquired in, or exported from, its country of origin (or any intermediate country in which it may have been legally owned) in violation of that country's laws. (For the purposes of this paragraph 'country of origin' includes the United Kingdom).

9.3. In accordance with the provisions of the UNESCO 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, which the UK ratified with effect from November 1 2002, and the Dealing in Cultural Objects (Offences) Act 2003, the Centre will reject any items that have been illicitly traded. The governing body will be guided by the national guidance on the responsible acquisition of cultural property issued by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport in 2005.

10. Human remains

The Centre does not hold or intend to acquire any human remains.

11. Biological and geological material

The Centre will not acquire any biological or geological material.

12. Archaeological material

The Centre will not acquire any archaeological material.

13. Exceptions

Any exceptions to the above clauses will only be because the Centre is:

- acting as an externally approved repository of last resort for material of local (UK) origin
- acting with the permission of authorities with the requisite jurisdiction in the country of origin

In these cases the Centre will be open and transparent in the way it makes decisions and will act only with the express consent of an appropriate outside authority. The Centre will document when these exceptions occur.

14. Spoliation

The Centre will use the statement of principles ‘Spoliation of Works of Art during the Nazi, Holocaust and World War II period’, issued for non-national museums in 1999 by the Museums and Galleries Commission.

15. The Repatriation and Restitution of objects and human remains

The Centre’s governing body, acting on the advice of the Centre’s professional staff, if any, may take a decision to return human remains (unless covered by the ‘Guidance for the care of human remains in museums’ issued by DCMS in 2005) , objects or specimens to a country or people of origin. The Centre will take such decisions on a case by case basis; within its legal position and taking into account all ethical implications and available guidance. This will mean that the procedures described in 16.1-5 will be followed but the remaining procedures are not appropriate.

16. Disposal procedures

- 16.1 These disposal procedures apply to items in the Centre’s Accessioned Collection and Archived Collection.
- 16.2 All disposals will be undertaken with reference to the SPECTRUM Primary Procedures on disposal.
- 16.3 The governing body will confirm that it is legally free to dispose of an item. Agreements on disposal made with donors will also be taken into account.
- 16.4 When disposal of a museum object is being considered, the Centre will establish if it was acquired with the aid of an external funding organisation. In such cases, any conditions attached to the original grant will be followed. This may include repayment of the original grant and a proportion of the proceeds if the item is disposed of by sale.
- 16.5 When disposal is motivated by curatorial reasons the procedures outlined below will be followed and the method of disposal may be by gift, sale, exchange, or as a last resort - destruction.
- 16.6 The decision to dispose of material from the collections will be taken by the governing body only after full consideration of the reasons for disposal. Other factors including public benefit, the implications for the Centre’s collections

and collections held by museums and other organisations collecting the same material or in related fields will be considered. Expert advice will be obtained and the views of stakeholders such as donors, researchers, local and source communities and others served by the Centre will also be sought.

- 16.7 A decision to dispose of a specimen or object, whether by gift, exchange, sale or destruction (in the case of an item too badly damaged or deteriorated to be of any use for the purposes of the collections or for reasons of health and safety), will be the responsibility of the governing body of the Centre acting on the advice of professional curatorial staff, if any, and not of the Director or manager of the collection acting alone. The responsibility to make decisions regarding the disposal of non-accessioned objects from the Archived Collection has been delegated to the CEO and the Collections Manager by the governing body.
- 16.8 Once a decision to dispose of material in the collection has been taken, priority will be given to retaining it within the public domain. It will therefore be offered in the first instance, by gift or sale, directly to other Accredited Museums likely to be interested in its acquisition.
- 16.9 If the material is not acquired by any Accredited museum to which it was offered as a gift or for sale, then the museum community at large will be advised of the intention to dispose of the material normally through a notice on the MA's Find an Object web listing service, an announcement in the Museums Association's Museums Journal or in other specialist publications and websites (if appropriate).
- 16.10 The announcement relating to gift or sale will indicate the number and nature of specimens or objects involved, and the basis on which the material will be transferred to another institution. Preference will be given to expressions of interest from other Accredited Museums. A period of at least two months will be allowed for an interest in acquiring the material to be expressed. At the end of this period, if no expressions of interest have been received, the Centre may consider disposing of the material to other interested individuals and organisations giving priority to organisations in the public domain.
- 16.11 Any monies received by the Centre governing body from the disposal of items will be applied solely and directly for the benefit of the collections. This normally means the purchase of further acquisitions. In exceptional cases, improvements relating to the care of collections in order to meet or exceed Accreditation requirements relating to the risk of damage to and deterioration of the collections may be justifiable. Any monies received in compensation for the damage, loss or destruction of items will be applied in the same way. Advice on those cases where the monies are intended to be used for the care of collections will be sought from the Arts Council England.

- 16.12 The proceeds of a sale will be allocated so it can be demonstrated that they are spent in a manner compatible with the requirements of the Accreditation standard. Money must be restricted to the long-term sustainability, use and development of the collection.
- 16.13** Full records will be kept of all decisions on disposals and the items involved and proper arrangements made for the preservation and/or transfer, as appropriate, of the documentation relating to the items concerned, including photographic records where practicable in accordance with SPECTRUM Procedure on deaccession and disposal.

Disposal by exchange

- 16.14 The nature of disposal by exchange means that the Centre will not necessarily be in a position to exchange the material with another Accredited museum. The governing body will therefore ensure that issues relating to accountability and impartiality are carefully considered to avoid undue influence on its decision-making process.
- 16.14.1 In cases where the governing body wishes for sound curatorial reasons to exchange material directly with Accredited or non-Accredited museums, with other organisations or with individuals, the procedures in paragraphs 16.1-5 will apply.
- 16.14.2 If the exchange is proposed to be made with a specific Accredited museum, other Accredited museums which collect in the same or related areas will be directly notified of the proposal and their comments will be requested.
- 16.14.3 If the exchange is proposed with a non-Accredited museum, with another type of organisation or with an individual, the Centre will place a notice on the MA's Find an Object web listing service, or make an announcement in the Museums Association's Museums Journal or in other specialist publications and websites (if appropriate).
- 16.14.4 Both the notification and announcement must provide information on the number and nature of the specimens or objects involved both in the Centre's collection and those intended to be acquired in exchange. A period of at least two months must be allowed for comments to be received. At the end of this period, the governing body must consider the comments before a final decision on the exchange is made.

Disposal by destruction

- 16.15 If it is not possible to dispose of an object through transfer or sale, the governing body may decide to destroy it.
- 16.16 It is acceptable to destroy material of low intrinsic significance (duplicate mass-produced articles or common specimens which lack significant provenance) where no alternative method of disposal can be found.
- 16.17 Destruction is also an acceptable method of disposal in cases where an object is in extremely poor condition, has high associated health and safety risks or is part of an approved destructive testing request identified in an organisation's research policy.
- 16.18 Where necessary, specialist advice will be sought to establish the appropriate method of destruction. Health and safety risk assessments will be carried out by trained staff where required.
- 16.19 The destruction of objects should be witnessed by an appropriate member of the Centre's workforce. In circumstances where this is not possible, e.g. the destruction of controlled substances, a police certificate should be obtained and kept in the relevant object history file.