



Florence Nightingale Museum

Collections Development Policy

Name of governing body: Florence Nightingale Museum Trust

Date on which this policy was approved by governing body: 30/01/2025

Policy review procedure:

The collections development policy will be published and reviewed from time to time, at least once every five years.

Approved by the Board of Trustees.

Date at which this policy is due for review: November 2029

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.

Complied by Hannah Amos (Collections Manager)

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1. Relationship to other relevant policies and plans of the organisation

1.1 The museum's statement of purpose is:

The Florence Nightingale Museum celebrates the life and work of the best-known figure in nursing history. Located within St Thomas' Hospital, the museum was opened in 1989 and now forms a key part of London's medical heritage. The collection consists of personal material associated with Florence Nightingale, items relating to the Crimean War and nursing artefacts.

1.2 The governing body will ensure that both acquisition and disposal are carried out openly and with transparency.

1.3 By definition, the museum 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 museum's collection.

1.4 Acquisitions outside the current stated policy will only be made in exceptional circumstances.

1.5 The museum 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 museum 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 museum can acquire a valid title to the item in question.

1.7 The museum will not undertake disposal motivated principally by financial reasons.

2. History of the Collection

The collection of the Florence Nightingale was first formed by the Matron of St Thomas' Hospital, Alicia Lloyd Still, between the years 1913-1940. The collection was held at the Nightingale Training School, in St Thomas' Hospital, London and was nicknamed the 'Nightingalia'.

A number of small exhibitions of the objects were held throughout the twentieth century to coincide with significant anniversaries of Nightingale's life. This collection was transferred to the care of the newly formed Florence Nightingale Museum Trust in 1983. The focus for the museum at this point in time was firmly Florence Nightingale, so any objects beyond the scope of the museum's collecting policy was transferred to the History and Works of Art Committee of St Thomas' Hospital.

The museum then opened to the public in 1989 with the core collection on display. To coincide with the 100-year anniversary of the death of Nightingale in 2010, the museum was refurbished offering an opportunity to update the museum and redisplay many of the objects.

3. An Overview of Current Collection

The current collection can be defined by a set of key themes that cover the life, work and legacy of Nightingale. There are currently around 3000 objects within the collection, which comprise of historical artefacts, letters, books, artworks, as well as other archival material. Most of the collection was once owned or gifted by Nightingale or is associated with the Nightingale Training School.

Key themes:

- The life of Florence Nightingale and her legacy
- Nightingale and the Crimean War
- Nightingale's work on public health reform and community nursing initiatives,
- Nightingale's work on army health reform & military nursing
- Nightingale's work on hospital planning and design
- Nightingale's reform work on midwifery
- Origins of nurse training and the history of the Nightingale Training School
- Statistical work of Nightingale

Key groups within the collection

Objects owned or gifted by Nightingale – a large portion of the collection is made up of objects that once belonged to Nightingale at different stages of her life, while many other objects are one she passed or bought as gifts for others, often her family or nurses at the training school

Correspondence from Nightingale – the collection includes around 1000 letters from Florence Nightingale. The earliest letters date from around the time Nightingale went out the hospitals in the Crimean War to very late in her life.

Rare books- FNM holds a rare book collection of around 284 titles. Many of these have been personally inscribed by Nightingale, often when they have been given as a gift by her.

Nightingale Training School – many 'Nightingale Nurses' (those who have trained at the Nightingale Training School) have donated objects, such as uniforms, certificates, paperwork and nursing badges used or associated with their time at the school or working at St Thomas' Hospital.

Holdings at London Metropolitan Archives – a large portion of the FNM archive was deposited at the LMA while the collection was still part of St Thomas' Hospital. The archive that is now owned by the museum consists of letters and correspondence sent by Nightingale, photographs and other documentation associated with Nightingale's work during the Crimean War.

Key acquisitions since the founding of the museum:

Lea Hurst Collection – purchased from the Royal Surgical Aid Society in 2005. This collection consists of important objects from Nightingale's life, such as the taxidermied owl, Athena, family paintings and drawings, documents and her 'Herbarium', many of which are on display in the museum.

The Romsey Album (2006) – this photograph album featuring 197 photographs of people who lived in and around Romsey. This includes a previously unknown photograph of Nightingale sitting under a tree at Embley Park.

Nursing Oral History Project (2006 – 2007) – this project saw the recording of around 50 audio and filmed interviews of those who had either been a patient or worked at St Thomas' Hospital.

Tardieu Paintings – in 2013 the museum was able to purchase a set of 10 paintings by Victor Tardieu, thanks to funding from the Heritage Lottery, The Victoria and Albert Purchase Grant Fund and Guy's and St Thomas Charity. These paintings give a glimpse of the field hospitals and the work of the nurses who staffed them, during the First World War.

Florence Nightingale's Wheelchair – in 2023 the FNM acquired the wheelchair that Nightingale had used in later life from the Johns Hopkins Hospital and Johns Hopkins University. It had been in the USA for the past 100 years, so the museum welcomed the chance to bring the chair back to the UK.

4. Themes and priorities for future collecting

The Florence Nightingale Museums approach to collecting is shaped by its statement of purpose, strategic goals and its responsibility to manage collections legally, ethically and effectively. We will take a responsive approach to collecting, assessing each offer of a donation or bequest on a case-by-case basis.

We will collect within our resources, ensuring there is adequate space to store or display an object, as well as the resources to care for or conserve an object.

We recognise the need for collecting information alongside the object or material to ensure full compliance with the SPECTRUM standard.

New acquisitions will add to our knowledge of Florence Nightingale's life and legacy, enhancing the stories currently told in the museum, as well as exploring new stories.

The museum does not have an acquisition budget, so only donations and bequests of objects can be considered. If the museum becomes aware of any objects or material for sale that are of particular interest, a case will be put forward for a funding application to a relevant grant programme if available at the time.

The museum will actively look to collect:

- Objects relating to FN's life and work – including personal possessions, writings and publications.
- Material relating to the Nightingale Training School – its origins, development, training provided, the probationer nurses, from its beginnings to its closure and move to KCL in the 1990s, as well as stories of the Nightingale Nurses and their subsequent careers.
- Crimean War material that helps to explain FNs and the other nurses work, the role of the sanitary commission and subsequent Army Reforms, including the development of military nursing.
- Material related to Florence Nightingale's statistical work and development of evidence-based practice in medical care/nursing.

The museum will not collect:

- Materials associated with hospitals and training schools that are not St Thomas's Hospital or the Nightingale Training School.
- Materials about other famous nurses unless there is a known and proved connection with Florence Nightingale or The Nightingale Training School.
- Duplicate items of those already held within the collections unless there is a specific reason for doing so.

- Unsolicited donations received through the post or left at the front desk of the museum.

Limitations on collecting activities

The museum recognises its responsibility, in acquiring additions to its collections, to ensure that care of collections, documentation arrangements and use of collections will meet the requirements of the Accreditation Standard. It will take into account limitations on collecting imposed by such factors as staffing levels, storage and care of collection arrangements.

The Museum does not currently have the space to display or store large objects. It will only accept donations or loans of objects in poor condition, if resources for remedial conservation are available or if it is established that an object is unique/extremely rare.

5. Themes for rationalisation and disposal

5.1 The museum 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.

Priorities to be considered for rationalisation and disposal include:

- Duplicated material
- Items that have no relevance to the collection policy
- Material which has no provenance

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

6.1 The museum 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 museum 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):

- Royal College of Nurses Archive and Library
- British Red Cross Museum and Archive
- Claydon House (National Trust)
- Claydon House Trust Archives
- The Museum of Military Medicine
- The National Army Museum
- Science Museum
- London Metropolitan Archives
- Royal College of Surgeons

8. Archival Holdings

As the museum holds archives, including photographs and printed ephemera, its governing body will be guided by the Code of Practice on Archives for Museums and Galleries in the United Kingdom (3rd ed., 2002).

9. Acquisition

9.1 The policy for agreeing acquisitions is:

The Collections SubGroup approves all external loans, acquisitions and disposals on a quarterly basis.

9.2 The museum 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.

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 museum 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

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

11. Biological and Geological Material

11.1 So far as biological and geological material is concerned, the museum will not acquire by any direct or indirect means any specimen that has been collected, sold or otherwise transferred in contravention of any national or international wildlife protection or natural history conservation law or treaty of the United Kingdom or any other country, except with the express consent of an appropriate outside authority.

12. Archaeological Material

12.1 The museum will not acquire archaeological material (including excavated ceramics) in any case where the governing body or responsible officer has any suspicion that the circumstances of their recovery involved a failure to follow the appropriate legal procedures.

12.2 In England, Wales and Northern Ireland the procedures include reporting finds to the landowner or occupier of the land and to the proper authorities in the case of possible treasure (i.e. the Coroner for Treasure) as set out in the Treasure Act 1996 (as amended by the Coroners & Justice Act 2009).

13. Exceptions

13.1 Any exceptions to the above clauses will only be because the museum 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 museum 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 museum will document when these exceptions occur.

14. Spoilation

14.1 The museum 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 & Human Remains

15.1 The museum's governing body, acting on the advice of the museum'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 museum 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.

15.2 The disposal of human remains from museums in England, Northern Ireland and Wales will follow the procedures in the 'Guidance for the care of human remains in museums'.

16. Disposal Procedures

16.1 All disposals will be undertaken with reference to the SPECTRUM Primary Procedures on disposal, the Museum Association Code of Ethics and the 'Museum Association Off the Shelf: a toolkit for ethical transfer, reuse and disposal' document.

16.2 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.

16.3 When disposal of a museum object is being considered, the museum 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.

16.4 When disposal is motivated by curatorial reasons the procedures outlined below will be followed and the method of disposal may be by gift or sale or as a last resort - destruction.

16.5 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 museum'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 museum will also be sought.

16.6 A decision to dispose of a specimen or object, whether by gift, 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 museum acting on the advice of professional curatorial staff, if any, and not of the curator or manager of the collection acting alone.

16.7 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.

16.8 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).

16.9 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 museum may consider disposing of the material to other interested individuals and organisations giving priority to organisations in the public domain.

16.10 Any monies received by the museum 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.

16.11 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.

16.12 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

16.13 The museum will not dispose of items by exchange.

Disposal by destruction

16.14 If it is not possible to dispose of an object through transfer or sale, the governing body may decide to destroy it.

16.15 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.

16.16 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.

16.17 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.

16.18 The destruction of objects should be witnessed by an appropriate member of the museum workforce. In circumstances where this is not possible, eg the destruction of controlled substances, a police certificate should be obtained and kept in the relevant object history file.