

## Collections Management made simple

A review of:

Hillhouse, Susanna. 2009. *Collections Management: a practical guide*. Collections Trust.

Created to be an accessible and easy to follow guide to the *PAS 197:2009 Code of practice for cultural collections management* that was recently released, *Collections Management: a practical guide* presents the guidelines of the PAS in a clear and concise way. The PAS was specifically designed for the use of senior level management and its language may not easily be understood by collections workers or students. This book fills that understanding gap so that all collections workers can assist in forming a collection management policy and value its implementation.

*Collections Management: a practical guide* is laid out using the same chapter headings as PAS 197 to make it easier to the reader to find and follow the information presented. The book clearly lays out a suggested system for writing a collections management policy and explains, in a simple but detailed way, what such a policy should focus on and include. Collections holders should find it straightforward in designing their own policy by following this document, which makes it invaluable to the sector's knowledge and a great addition to the Collections Trust's Practical Guides Series.

The contents of the book include many helpful hints and suggestions. Chapter 2 lists common terms and definitions agreed on by the sector for easy reference. This is invaluable to a museum, library or archive to assist them in a collections management policy because it mainstreams the language for everyone.

Within the margins are three different categories of short tips. The first, called Top Tip, gives small, but helpful suggestions that compliment the paragraph beside it. These categories are also colour coded to make spotting them easy. Green signifies a Top Tip, while red is used for Beware warnings to the reader. These usually take the form of reminders of what to keep in mind while policy planning. The last colour, orange, is a Legal Alert which states what legal considerations should be kept in mind during the planning and writing stages of a collections management policy.

The most helpful part of the book to collections professionals will be the included case studies. In each chapter there are short blurbs describing what other organisations have done based on the collections management framework suggested in this book and details their success. Certain aspects of collections management are focused on and discussed by showing the steps the organisations undertook to deal with that aspect. Also part of the case studies are a few words of advice from staff at the highlighted organisations. These pieces of advice are invaluable to the reader as they highlight what previous organisations consider the most important things to keep in mind.

*Collections Management: a practical guide* lays the framework for policy planning out in a clear way. Included in the book is a diagram taken from PAS 197 that show the order in which a collections holder should work out their framework. This diagram is explained in detail in Chapter 3, breaking it down into each of seven steps. Following this are four Chapters that break down the collections management framework even further. These are defined by the sections on Collections Development, Information, Access, and Care and Conservation. In each section the topic is explained in regards to why it is integral to

collections management and how it should be worked into the framework. These are shown practically using case studies from various organisations.

Included throughout the book are 11 key steps to set out a collections management framework. These are highlighted in turquoise at the bottom of each section and helpfully provided in a list format again in the last chapter for easy reference. They are simple and straightforward key steps to remember during framework.

In all, this book will provide invaluable information to all museums, libraries and archives looking to create a new collections management policy or to reformat their current one. The language is simple to understand and provides all staff and volunteers with an equal footing. This book will also prove useful to students studying cultural subjects as the format is such that it will not put them off as too difficult and will give them the necessary information and collections management understanding when they start their professional careers.

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