

## Information Management in Museums – What is an Information Audit?

Information is a core museum asset - used strategically and managed effectively, information protects and enhances the museum's activities and its reputation.

Information in a museum can include:

- entries in a collections management system
- equipment manuals and repair logs
- blog posts and other web-based information feeds

### Information is Power – have you got it where you want it?

An **information audit** identifies and helps you to analyse the information resources your museum owns.

An audit flags up information that can be re-used and exploited more effectively, areas where effort is duplicated, and risks to information security.

### How to audit

Information can be audited through one-to-one **interviews** and self-audit **questionnaires**.

Both methods identify the **name**, the **location**, and the **format** of each information resource, and who **uses**, **contributes to** or **manages** it.

**Questionnaires** are an efficient way to gather a large amount of quantitative data and are useful in gaining an overview, particularly in larger museums. The disadvantage of questionnaires is that the results often need further qualitative follow-up.

**Interviews** are more time consuming to undertake, but provide a clearer insight into complex or behaviour-based issues. They are also a good way of raising awareness of information management issues with key staff.

A **dual approach**, starting with questionnaires followed by targeted interviews, is often most effective.

The **Information Policy Toolkit** at [www.museuminfo-records.org.uk/toolkits/InformationPolicy.pdf](http://www.museuminfo-records.org.uk/toolkits/InformationPolicy.pdf) includes case studies from both small and large museums, and detailed guidance on conducting your audit.

### Using the results

The results gathered from your audit will highlight:

- areas of good practice
- issues that need urgent attention
- opportunities to share resources
- quick-win measures to undertake straight away

The data gathered can be illustrated in the form of an **information map**, which will provide an accessible reference to **what** information is held, **where** it is located, **who** produces and manages it, and **why** it is needed.

The audit results should feed into the development of your **information policy**. They will also inform strategic planning, project management and implementation of core museum activities.

**Knowing more about the information you and your colleagues create and hold, and how it can be used more effectively, will give you greater control of a vital museum asset.**

### Next steps

Visit [www.museuminfo-records.org.uk](http://www.museuminfo-records.org.uk) to learn more about Information Management and Records Management in museums, and to access further resources and training materials you can adapt and use free of charge.