

Equality Impact Assessment: *Collections Development Policy RAMM (2020–25)*

Background

In common with many museums, a significant number of RAMM's acquisitions made in the 19th and early 20th centuries represented the interests of the most powerful elements in society – often wealthy, white men from colonial or military backgrounds. Their collecting occurred at a time of unequal power between Britain and the people who lived in its colonies. The recent media coverage of the repatriation of Chief Crowfoot's regalia from RAMM suggests a shift in public opinion on the merits of museums holding sacred artefacts that remain powerful symbols for indigenous communities; it is likely that over the coming years there will be more requests for the return of such material. In these circumstances a Collections Development Policy (CDP) is key in ensuring that due process is followed. Appended to the CDP is a new interim statement on repatriation that will be revised when Arts Council England change the guidance given to museums on this issue.

The nature of RAMM's rich and diverse collection means that it can be used to tell stories that are of relevance to people who fall within the protected characteristic groups. For instance, recent research carried out by a community group and members of an advisory panel predominantly from BAME backgrounds, has shown that RAMM's collections can shed light on Devon and Exeter's role in the transatlantic trade in enslaved people, and this will form the content for an exhibition in 2021. An exhibition of RAMM's lace collection in 2020 focused on the disparity between the fashionable elite who wore lace and the poverty and appalling working conditions of those who made it. And over the course of 2020 RAMM's collections are being used for a series of 'Untold Stories' tweets and a new tour of RAMM's galleries that showcase the contributions of, among others, deaf and disabled people and pioneering women artists, scientists and collectors. A collaboration with the University of Exeter is also allowing for a reconsideration of RAMM's collections from the perspective of members of LGBTQ+ communities.

While the new CDP cannot address wholesale historical inequality, it can begin to redress the imbalances inherent in past collecting practices. For example, new acquisitions for the Ethnographic collection will aid understanding between museum visitors and the communities represented in the collections; Contemporary Art acquisitions can bring new and often critical perspectives on past behaviour; new acquisitions in Fine Art will favour women artists, currently underrepresented in the collection, and better reflect the diversity of contemporary British society. RAMM will make selective acquisitions of contemporary objects relevant to Exeter and its people for the Social History collection.

The Equality Act 2010 includes a general duty which requires public authorities, in the exercise of their functions, to have due regard to the need to:

- **Eliminate discrimination**, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act.
- **Advance equality of opportunity** between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it.
- **Foster good relations** between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not

In order to comply with the general duty authorities must assess the impact on equality of decisions, policies and practices. These duties do not prevent the authority from reducing services where necessary, but they offer a way of developing proposals that consider the impacts on all members of the community.

Authorities which fail to carry out equality impact assessments risk making poor and unfair decisions which may discriminate against particular groups and worsen inequality.

Committee name and date:	Report Title	Decisions being recommended:	People with protected characteristics potentially impacted by the decisions to be made:
Executive Committee 2 June 2020	Collections Development Policy	The policy is adopted by ECC.	

Factors to consider in the assessment: For each of the groups below, an assessment has been made on whether the proposed decision will have a **positive, negative or neutral impact**. This is must be noted in the table below alongside brief details of why this conclusion has been reached and notes of any mitigation proposed. Where the impact is negative, a **high, medium or low assessment** is given. The assessment rates the impact of the policy based on the current situation (i.e. disregarding any actions planned to be carried out in future).

High impact – a significant potential impact, risk of exposure, history of complaints, no mitigating measures in place etc.

Medium impact –some potential impact exists, some mitigating measures are in place, poor evidence

Low impact – almost no relevancy to the process, e.g. an area that is very much legislation led and where the Council has very little discretion

Protected characteristic/ area of interest	Positive or Negative Impact	High, Medium or Low Impact	Reason
Race and ethnicity (including Gypsies and Travellers; migrant workers; asylum seekers).	Positive		New acquisitions better reflecting the diversity of contemporary Exeter
Disability: as defined by the Equality Act – a person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse impact on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.			
Sex/Gender	Positive		New acquisitions to redress historical imbalance in collecting women artists
Gender reassignment			
Religion and belief (includes no belief, some philosophical beliefs such as Buddhism and sects within religions).	Positive		New acquisitions reflecting a multi-faith society
Sexual orientation (including heterosexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual).			
Age (children and young people aged 0-24; adults aged 25-50; younger older people aged 51-75/80; older people 81+; frail older people; people living with age related conditions. The age categories are for illustration only as overriding consideration should be given to needs).			
Pregnancy and maternity including new and breast feeding mothers			
Marriage and civil partnership status			

Actions identified that will mitigate any negative impacts and/or promote inclusion

- **New acquisitions can be a source of local pride and can help to promote community identity and cohesion**

Officer:

Date: