Object entry

Definition and scope

This procedure is for the receipt of objects and associated information which enter your premises for whatever reason.

It is the key to ensuring that all objects that enter your premises are accounted for. It applies to all objects entering your care, including loans, enquiries, and acquisitions to permanent or support collections. You are expected to take the same care of objects not belonging to you as you would with your own objects. You might be held liable for loss of, or damage to, objects whether solicited or not.

Use the procedure in conjunction with any other procedure where an object arrives at your premises. An object might be:

- Brought to your premises by a member of the public and left for identification as part of your enquiry service;
- Brought to your premises by a member of the public to be considered as a gift, or purchase, or as a loan;
- Arrive at your premises as an unsolicited gift e.g. occasionally objects are left outside the building anonymously, or arrive in the post. In this case you are under no obligation to take the object into your collections, but will need to record its existence before you decide what to do with it.

Also material (objects and archives) might arrive at your premises after archaeological excavation or other types of fieldwork.

The SPECTRUM Standard

You must have a policy on why and how you receive objects and other material. You can read about key issues this should cover in the ***Detailed guidance - Policy requirements*** section of this procedure.

You must have a written procedure that explains the steps to follow when an object arrives at your premises. The ***Suggested procedure*** is a useful starting point. Your own procedure must meet the following *Minimum requirements*:

Minimum requirement	**Why this is important**
You are able to account for all objects left in your care. See: • All the steps in the ***Suggested procedure***.	So that, for example: • You can easily locate an object if it is to be returned to its owner when the period of deposit is over; • You do not lose accountably for the objects left in your care, leaving you open to claims for loss.
You have clear terms and conditions for objects that you receive. See: • The detailed guidance in the ***Policy requirements***.	So that, for example: • It is clear to the owner of the object what care you will take of the objects they deposit with you; • You do not receive unwanted objects which will waste your resources.
You record why the object is entering your premises. See: • Step 2 in ***Creating a receipt and entry record***.	So that, for example: • So you can process the object correctly; • You do not incorrectly process the object, for example treat a loan as an acquisition.

You record the end of, or schedule for review of, the deposit. See: • Step 2 in ***Creating a receipt and entry record***. .	So that, for example: • You can plan for the return of the object; • You do not waste resources on objects that you will not acquire.
You record who has legal title to the object if you acquire it. See: • Step 2 in ***Creating a receipt and entry record***.	So that, for example: • You are able to carry out the transfer of title process with the owner; • You do not lose legal title to an object by not properly carrying out transfer of title.
You record significant information about the object, to be added to in the future. See: • Step 2 in ***Creating a receipt and entry record***.	So that, for example: • Significant information can be included in your system as soon as possible; • You do not lose significant information about the object, which could lead to it being incorrectly managed, used or interpreted to the public.
You, and the owner (or depositor), know your liability for the loss or damage of objects you do not own, whilst they are in your care. See: • Step 4 in ***Creating a receipt and entry record***.	So that, for example: • The owner is aware of the limits of any claim they may make if anything goes wrong; • You do not take on unacceptable or inappropriate liabilities, perhaps financial.
You provide a receipt for the owner or depositor. See: • Step 4 in ***Creating a receipt and entry record***.	So that, for example: • It is clear to the owner that you have accepted care of the object they have deposited; • You do not lose the evidence of the object's entry into your premises, leaving you open to claims for loss.
You can uniquely identify the newly received object, or group of objects. See: • Step 5 in ***Processing the object***.	So that, for example: • To allow you to distinguish between objects that look similar whilst on deposit; • You do not 'mix-up' similar looking objects, and therefore potentially lose control over their whereabouts.

***Object entry* is a SPECTRUM Primary Procedure**. This means that in order to meet the documentation requirements for the *Museum Accreditation Scheme* you must maintain the SPECTRUM *Standard* for this procedure.

Suggested procedure

Preparing for known Object entry

1 You may have advanced notice of the arrival of an object (or group of objects), i.e. for:

- **An acquisition** (archaeological excavations, other types of fieldwork, bequests and purchases;
- **A loan**.

If you do, prepare for the arrival at your premises by:

- Clarifying any specific terms and conditions of deposit (if they are different from the standard);
- Briefing the relevant person(s), i.e. those who will be involved in the *Object entry* procedure;
- Having a storage location available;
- Checking that the object is in a fit state to be left in your custody;
- Confirming, for objects covered by the *Government Indemnity Scheme* that a condition check has carried out before transport.

Creating a receipt and entry record

2 Make a record of the significant information about the object as soon as it arrives. This should include the:

- ***Entry number***;
- Name and contact details of the current owner:
    - ***Current owner*** (use a standard form of name);
    - ***Address***;
    - ***Address - telephone***;
    - ***Address - e-mail***.
- Name and contact details the depositor (if they are not the owner):
    - ***Depositor*** (use a standard form of name);
    - ***Address***;
    - ***Address - telephone***;
    - ***Address - e-mail***.
- ***Entry date*** (use a standard format);
- Brief statement of condition and completeness (identify the composite parts of objects which might appear as one thing) - ***Condition note*** and ***Completeness note***;
- ***Brief description*** of the object(s), including any accompanying information concerning production and usage;
- ***Entry reason*** (use a standard term source);
- ***Entry method*** (use a standard term source);
- ***Number of objects*** deposited~~;~~
- Requirements of the owner (or depositor) including return details and confidentiality of information provided to you - ***Depositor's requirements***;
- Note of packing materials if necessary (they may be an integral part of the object) - ***Packing note***;
- Agreed ***Return date*** (use a standard format);
- Signature of the owner (or depositor if different);
- Name and signature of the person who receives the object - ***Object entry manager*** (use a standard form of name).
- Proposed object purchase price if appropriate - ***Object offer price*** (use local currency);
- Other significant information - ***Entry note***. This might be included, e.g.:
    - Insurance details (including a previously agreed valuation);
    - Field collection information where relevant (method, context, co-ordinates, finder);
    - A hazards note (e.g. chemical, radioactive);
    - Any legal/licence requirements (e.g. a firearms licence);
    - Any associated rights (e.g. copyright);
    - The owner's asking price if it is being offered for sale.

3 Check and make a brief note of the condition. Photograph the object wherever possible.

[Go to ***Object condition checking and technical assessment***]

Sometimes a more comprehensive condition report may be necessary. If needed, a risk assessment should also be carried out, giving the risks to people, and risks to other objects.

4 The recorded information should be given to the owner (or depositor) if possible:

a) **If they are present** – Give them a copy of the recorded information as a receipt for the object(s). Inform them of your terms and conditions for accepting deposits according to the reason for the deposit, including their rights in the personal information that you now holds.
b) **If the depositor is not present**, but known, when the material was received – Send them a copy of the entry documentation as a receipt and ask for a copy to be signed and returned.
c) **If the depositor is not known** – Record as much detail as possible, including photographs (if legally possible). Include an explanatory note indicating that the depositor was not available to verify details. See below for how to process them.

Processing the object

5 Tag the object with a temporary label marked with the ***Entry number***. If the object is in pieces, or cannot easily be tagged, place it in a container and tag the container.

6 Record the first location of the object.

[Go to ***Location and movement control***]

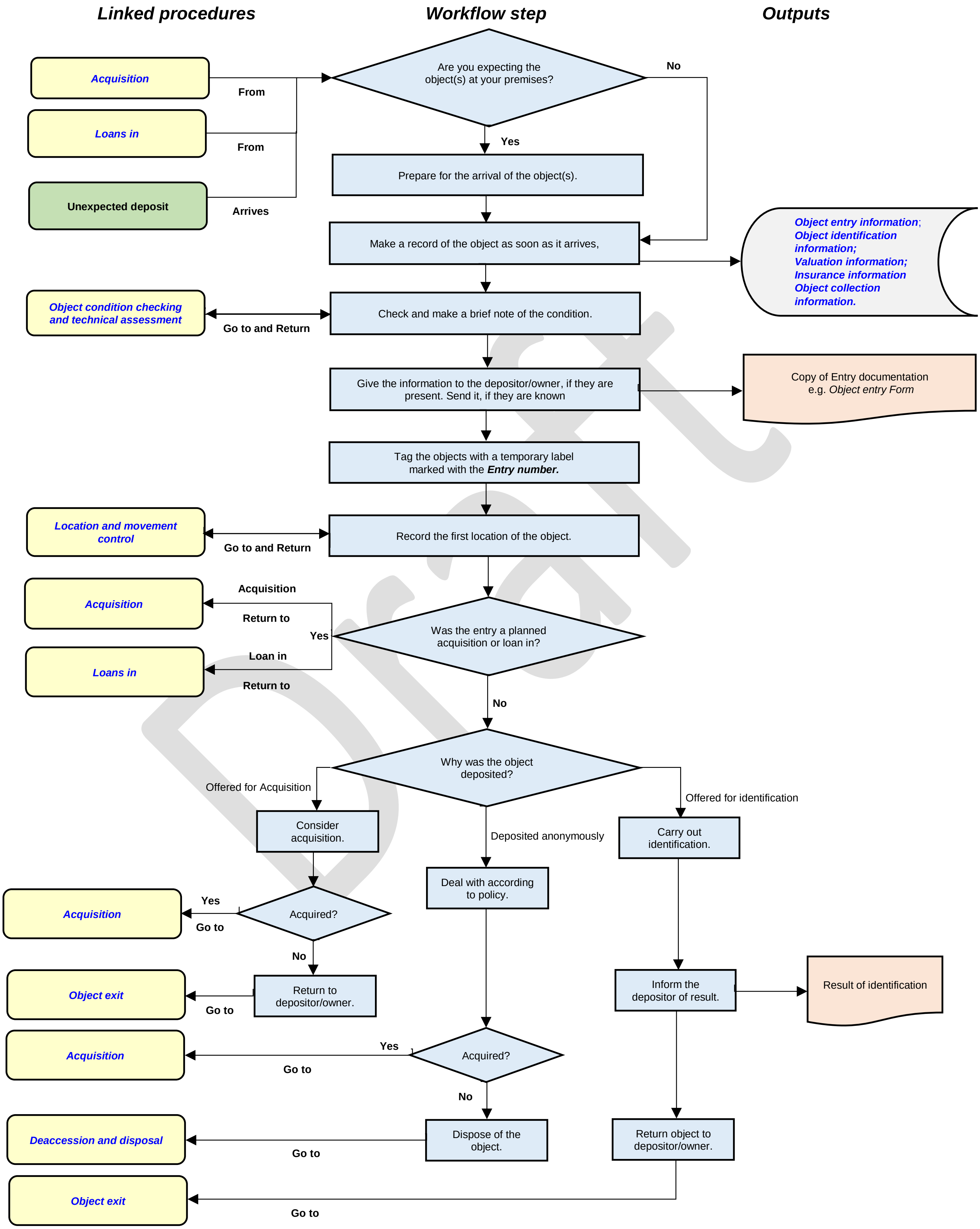
7 If the object has entered your premises as part of a planned:

- Acquisition: [Go back to ***Acquisition***];
- Loan in: [Go back to ***Loans in***].

If the object arrives unexpectedly then the next step in the procedure depends on why the object has entered your premises:

- If it is being ***offered for acquisition:***
    a. Consider the acquisition, and if you do acquire [Go to ***Acquisition***].
    b. If it is not acquired, ***return to the owner*** [Go to ***Object exit***].
- If it is being ***offered for identification***:
    a. Carry out the identification;
    b. Inform the depositor of the result;
    c. Return to the owner ***return to the owner*** [Go to ***Object exit***].
- If ***deposited anonymously***, deal with it in line with your policy:
    - For acquisition [Go to ***Acquisition***];
    - For disposal [Go to ***Deaccession and disposal***].

Suggested procedure workflow



Detailed guidance

Policy requirements

You must have a policy governing the entry of objects into your premises including acquisitions, loans, enquiries and other deposits. It is good practice to state:

- The circumstances in which deposits will be accepted, including an indication of the persons who are authorised to do this;
- The conditions which you will apply to the return of deposits;
- How long, and in what form, enquiry information is held;
- How you should deal with objects that have not been collected or returned to depositors.

Terms and conditions for deposited objects are especially important. They should include the following:

- A statement of the care and responsibility that will be taken by you;
- A disclaimer of liability;
- A declaration of the right to dispose of objects not collected by the depositor by an agreed date;
- A disclaimer concerning opinions on objects;
- A refusal to give valuations;
- For a proposed acquisition, a statement about the ownership status of the object(s);
- For a loan in, the steps you will take to return the object(s);
- In all cases, a timescale for any action;
- Establishment of which party is liable to costs incurred by the deposit e.g. transport costs.

Legal environment

It is important that the owner of the deposited object be identified in case of subsequent acquisition of the object. If the depositor is not the owner of the object, and especially if it is being offered as a gift or for sale, the depositor should sign to confirm that they have the authority to offer the object. The preferred method of doing this would be to have a signed statement from the owner, confirming that the depositor is acting on his or her behalf.

Always consult your normal source of legal advice when establishing terms and conditions of deposit, or if there is any doubt as to the ownership or legal status of an object. The deposit of certain natural science specimens and objects, e.g. ivory, may be restricted as a result of:

The Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981

It is an offence to damage the habitat or to injure or take from the wild certain species of plants, animals and birds. A licensing system covers exceptions.

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES)

CITES controls trade in wildlife and wildlife products to prevent endangered species of plants and animals from becoming extinct. It is a UN convention which is strictly implemented by the UK and other EU states to provide extra legal protection for many species.

Rights

Objects and other material may have rights associated with them, e.g. copyright. Also information that you record about the persons will be governed by rights legislation, e.g. *Data Protection*.

The procedure for the management of *Object entry* needs to take into account these rights. See the ***Rights management*** procedure for full details on how to do this.

Notes on the Suggested procedure

Preparing for known Object entry

If you already know that the object is going to arrive at your premises, e.g.:

- Collected by a member of staff as a gift which has already been accepted;
- Entering as a pre-arranged loan.

In both of these cases you may have already set up documentation for the object, and may even have allocated an *Accession number* or *Loan number*. It is still however still good practice to go through the *Object entry* procedure, and obtain a signature from the depositor. If a representative goes out to collect the loan or new acquisition they should take an entry form with them

Material from archaeological excavations or other types of fieldwork

If you acquire material (objects and archives) from archaeological excavations or types of fieldwork prepare for its acquisition and entry by:

1. Checking that you are the appropriate repository. You must make available (e.g. online or by e-mail) your acquisition policy and your conditions for deposition to a potential depositor. Encourage liaison between the potential depositor and yourself before, during and after fieldwork.

2. Assign a unique number to the item(s) - ***Object number***.

   In the case of archaeological items and records:

   - In England, Wales and Northern Ireland - assign an accession number before archaeological fieldwork starts;

   - In Scotland - the receiving organisation can only assign accession numbers at the post-excavation stage.

3. Make available to the depositor the standards for the transfer of project archives to your premises.

   These should include:
   - Recommendations on the content and presentation of the archive;
   - Standards for documentation, packaging and conservation requirements;
   - Arrangements for the transfer of ownership.

4. Assign a unique number to the item(s) - ***Object number***.

   Assess and record essential information on the size and content of the material and associated documentation for the following purposes:

   - Measurement against your acquisition policy, including preferred selection strategies;
   - Assessment of the condition of the material;
   - Assessment of transport and handling facilities required;
   - Assessment of type and volume of storage facilities required;
   - Assessment of deposition or storage grant to be charged, if applicable;
   - Establishment of who holds legal title to the items by appropriate due diligence checks;
   - Establishment of who holds any intellectual property rights (e.g. copyright) associated with the material (e.g. a project archive).

   A *proforma* or checklist could be used and might include the following information, the:

   - Quantity/type of small finds, bulk finds and environmental remains (in the case of large archaeological groups, it is possible to indicate the quantity by boxes and material type, e.g. '*6 boxes of Neolithic flints*'; '*20 boxes of post-medieval pottery*');
   - Quantity/type of the documentary archive in all media;
   - Stability of archive, conservation work carried out and required;
   - Suitability of packaging for storage;
   - Labelling, checklists and indexes to archive;
   - Cost of items (if bid for or purchased at auction or any other off-site location);
   - For fieldwork decide if the selection or discard of items is to take place prior to entry and acquisition, i.e. carried out on site or at assessment stage.

Make a ***Reference*** to this documentation, so that it can easily be found and referred to.

You should not accept any item for acquisition unless you can obtain a valid title to it. Therefore obtain agreement in principle from the landowner for the finds to be donated to you. Transfer of ownership to you must be completed before or on deposition.

[Go to ***Acquisition***]

5. Find out the date or approximate date that the items are due to arrive at your premises. Give recommendations to the owner for the care, storage and documentation of the items prior to acquisition.
6. Carry out a condition check prior to transport to confirm that the items are in a stable state and suitably packed prior to deposition:

[Go to ***Object condition checking and technical assessment***]

Then:

[Go to ***Object entry***]

Creating a receipt and entry record

Large groups of items

If it is not possible to count the number of objects deposited, e.g. in the case of a large number of potsherds, indicate the size of the deposit in an appropriately practical way, e.g. '2 boxes'. In this instance, it will be appropriate to assign numbers to groups of objects rather than individual items. Thought should also be given to the different levels of recording appropriate e.g. a summary list, rather than an itemised list of specimens, may be all that is immediately required, or indeed feasible.

Condition checking

It is particularly important to check the condition of the object at the time of deposit. This will establish the original condition of the object in the case of any claims against you by the owner, as well as protecting the existing collections against infestation in the case of deposited objects carrying invasive organisms, e.g. moulds, woodworm.

The condition report should be appropriate to the circumstances. Make a brief note of the condition as required, e.g. 'Small crack on base', 'Stain on back'. Obtain an image of the object wherever practicable. In some cases, a more comprehensive condition report may be necessary. If appropriate, a risk assessment should also be carried out. This should assess risks to people and risks to other objects.

Objects should only be accepted unexamined if they require unpacking by specialists. In such cases the receipt should state that the objects were received unexamined.

The form of **Object entry** *records*

Information for *Object entry* is usually managed on paper, rather than digitally, as it requires signatures, and receipts. *R*ecords can be:

- *Object entry* forms;
- *Object entry* files;
- Day books

Object entry forms
Pre-printed *Object Entry Forms* are available from the Collections Trust. These carbonless forms are available either from stock, or pre-numbered and overprinted with your organisation's name and address. They are printed on the reverse with standard terms and conditions for deposit. The forms are in triplicate:

- The top (white) copy of the form should be filed immediately into an 'entry file', where it serves as your master record;
- The second (pink) part of the form should be given to the depositor as a receipt for the object(s). This part of the form must be presented when items are returned to the owner/depositor;

- The third (blue) part of the form should be kept with the deposited object(s)s

The Object entry File
The *Object entry* File contains your master copy of deposited object information, filed in numerical order, with no gaps in the sequence. If you are using Collections Trust forms, this file will contain the white copies of the form, which carry the original signature of the owner/depositor. The *Object entry* File is an important archive and must be kept safe. It should be clear from the file which objects have entered your premises and what eventually happened to them.

Day Books
Some organisations use a book, usually known as a '*Day Book*' or '*Entry Book*', which usually records the date, the object, the name and address of the depositor, and the owner or depositor's signature. (Note, the *Day Book* **is not** an *Accession Register*, which is used to formally record the acquisitions into your permanent collections.)

Using only a Day Book to record *Object entry* does not meet *SPECTRUM* or *Museum Accreditation* standards as you are unable to provide a receipt for the depositor or provide terms and conditions of deposit. If you are using a daybook to manage your *Object entry* procedure, you will need to use it in conjunction with triplicate *Object entry forms* which provide a receipt for the depositor.