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an ETERNAL  
HERITAGE

# ETHER

## **SPECTRUM: The UK Museums Collection Management Standard**

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## Outline of this presentation...

- The WHAT and the WHY of SPECTRUM
- Procedures, Policies and People
- The SPECTRUM Procedures
- Detailed analysis of Object Entry
- How to get started with SPECTRUM
- Where we fit into SPECTRUM in SA

## What is SPECTRUM?

- *“SPECTRUM represents a common understanding of good practice for collections management in museums.”*
- *SPECTRUM contains procedures for managing the processes that an object goes through during its lifecycle in a museum.*
- Work started in 1991, launched in 1994.
- Now in use in more than 100 countries.
- Current version is V4

## Where SPECTRUM fits?

- Internationally recognised as the **LEADING standard for collections management** in the world.
- Is an integral element of the Museum Accreditation Scheme of the UK in terms of
  1. How the museums are run (governance)
  2. How they manage their collections (SPECTRUM)
  3. The experiences of the users/visitors

## The Structure of SPECTRUM

- **Procedures** – 21 in total of which 8 are PRIMARY (needed for accreditation)
  - Expressed in flowchart form
- **Policies** : guidance for procedures
- **Information Requirements** – what data is needed to be kept to manage procedures
  - Expressed as data structures
- **Advice** – general guidelines
  - Expressed as statements

# Collecting Organisation's Mission Statement

## Collections Management Policy

### Collections Development

policy,  
processes,  
procedures

- Pre-entry
- **Object entry**
- **Acquisition**
- Deaccession and disposal

### Collections Information

policy,  
processes,  
procedures

- Inventory control
- **Location and movement control**
- **Cataloguing**
- Insurance and indemnity
- Valuation control
- Audit
- Rights management
- **Object exit**
- **Retrospective documentation**

### Collections Access

policy,  
processes,  
procedures

- **Loans in**
- Use of collections
- **Loans out**

### Collections Care and Conservation

policy,  
processes,  
procedures

- Transport
- Object condition checking and technical assessment
- Conservation and collections care
- Risk management
- Loss and Damage

## Policies

*‘overall intentions and direction of an organisation as formally expressed by top management, [ or the governing body]’*

**PAS197 : Code of Practice for Cultural Collections Management.**

### MINIMUM STANDARD

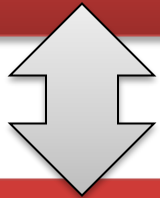
- for each procedure there is a **guiding policy** statement – which indicates the WHAT and the WHY
- Should not include the HOW, WHEN, WHO or WHERE (which are within procedures)



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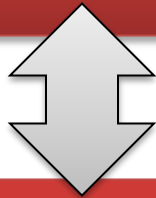
## Recommended Policy Structure

### Collections Management Policy Statement



Collections  
Development  
Policy

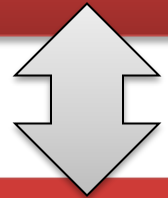
Acquisitions and  
Disposals



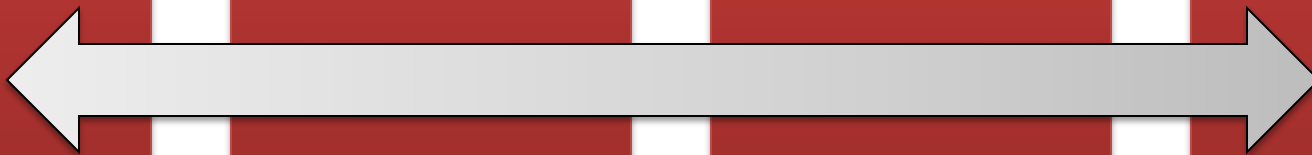
Collections  
Documentation  
Policy



Collections Care  
and  
Conservation  
Policy



Collections  
Access  
Policy





## Structure of each procedure

- Definition
  - the scope of the procedure
- Minimum Standard
  - This is what this procedure should achieve
  - As a checklist
- Workflow diagram
  - People
  - Process
  - Linked Procedures
  - Information
  - System

## Detailed Example : Object Entry Procedure

- Elements of the Procedure
  - Object Entry Policy
  - Definition
  - Minimum Standard
  - Procedure
  - Units of Information
  - Advice
  - Collection Management System

## Object Entry Policy

The organisation must have a policy covering the receipt and deposit of objects.

What should be included into the Object Entry Policy:

- **ACCEPTANCE**

- The circumstances in which deposits will be accepted, including an indication of the persons who are authorised to do this;

- **RETURNS:**

- The conditions which the organisation will apply to the return of deposits;

- **RETENTION:**

- How long, and in what form, information is held about deposits;

- **ORPHANS:**

- How the organisation should deal with objects that have not been collected by or returned to depositors.

## Object Entry Definition

*“The management and documentation of the receipt of objects and associated information which are not currently part of the collections. Any object which does not currently have an object number assigned by the receiving organisation must be dealt with within this procedure.”*

## Object Entry Procedure – Minimum Standard

The procedure for managing and documenting Object entry must:

- Establish the terms and conditions under which objects are being received for deposit;
- Uniquely identify the newly received object or associated group of objects;
- Ensure the organisation is able to account for all objects left in its care;
- Provide a receipt for the owner or depositor;

## Object Entry Procedure – Minimum Standard

- Help establish the extent of the organisation's liability;
- Indicate the reason for the receipt of the object;
- Determine a finite end to, or programme for review of, the deposit;
- Enable the object to be returned to the owner or depositor as required;

## Object Entry Procedure – Minimum Standard

- Allow for objects and associated records to be checked on entry to ensure that they correspond to any accompanying inventory and/or transfer of title documentation supplied;
- Establish who has legal title to the object in case of subsequent acquisition;
- Capture key information about the object, to be augmented in the future;
- Inform the decision making-process.



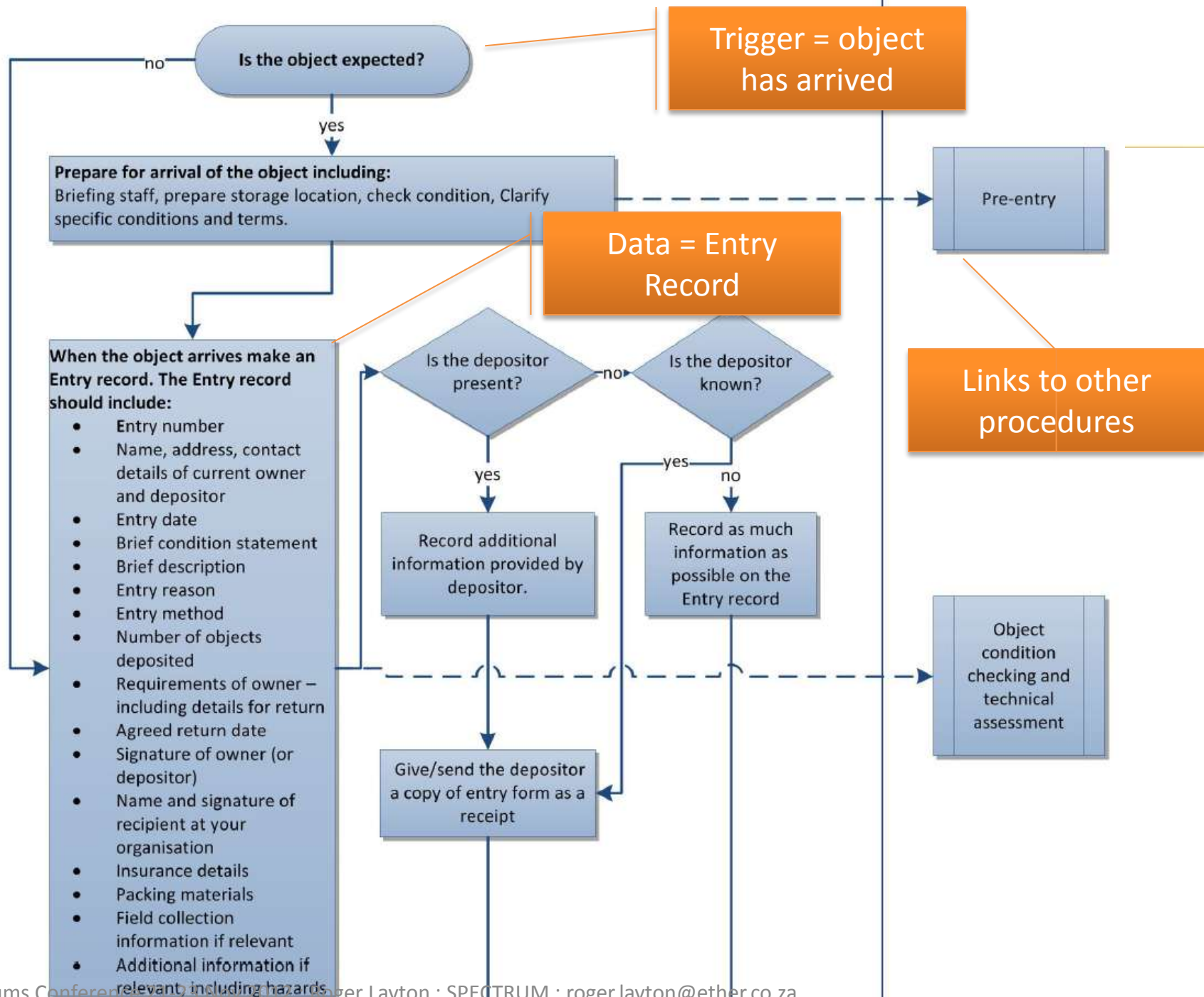
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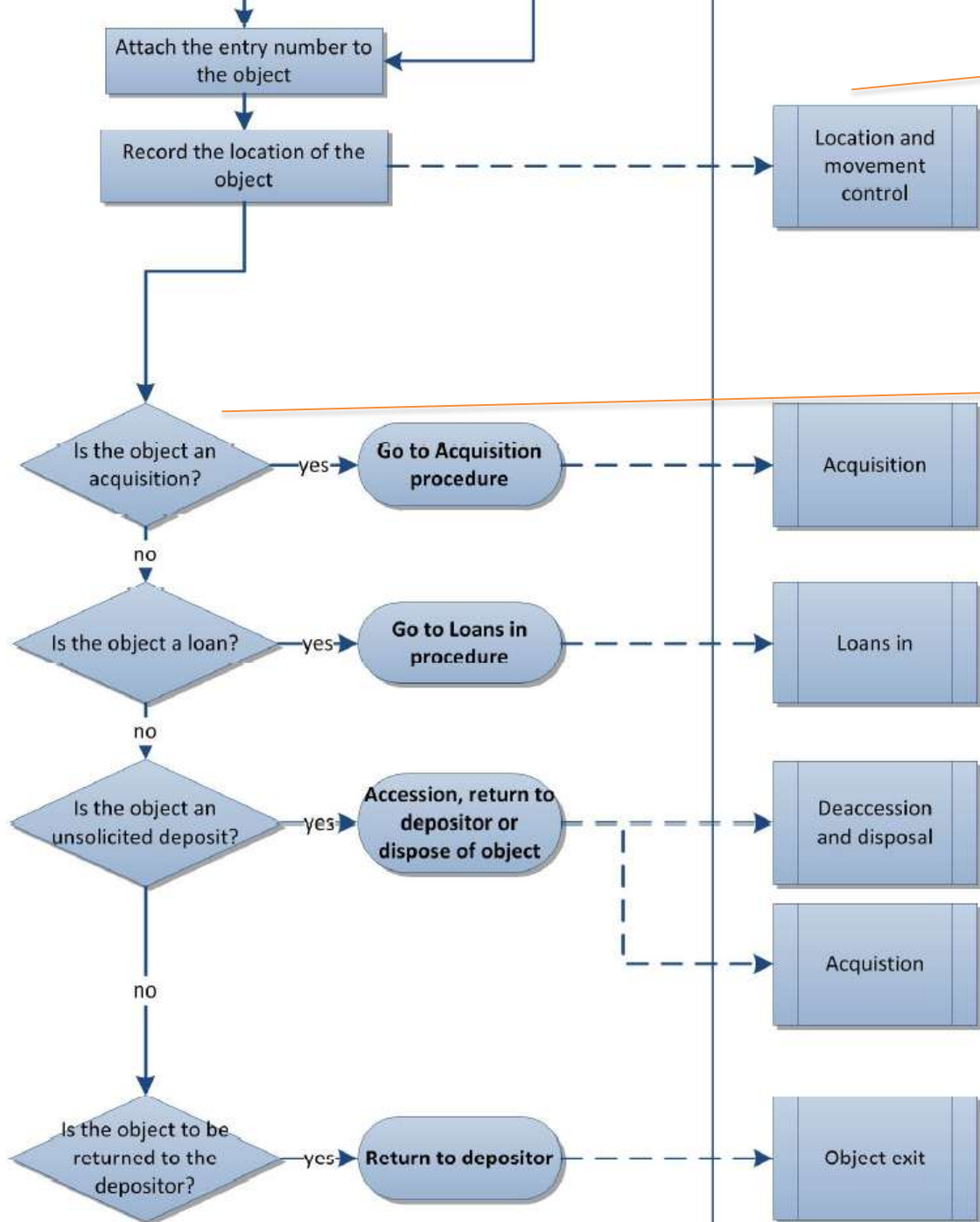
# Object Entry Procedure – Process

Common structure  
for all procedures









Always : identify the location

Decision : how to handle the object

# Object Entry – Units of Information

## *Object entry information*

(use also Common units)

Use to record an object entry event. Reference the object(s) involved using their *Object number* unit in the *Object identification information* group.

**Units of information:**

***Current owner (Org, Peo, Per)***

***Depositor (Org, Peo, Per)***

***Depositor's requirements***

***Entry date***

***Entry method***

***Entry note***

***Entry number***

***Entry reason***

***Packing note***

***Return date***

## Forms and Controls

Many museums use carbonless, triplicate forms as a convenient way to create entry records:

- The top copy of the form is kept in an entry file;
- The second copy is given to the owner or depositor as a receipt
- The third copy is kept with the object.

Can automate with a front-desk workstation linked to the collection management system.

Having an Entry Book, with no receipt, is insufficient.

## Object Entry – Who is Responsible?

- Policy should indicate this.
- Must the curator be on-site when objects arrive?
- Front-of-house staff will need to have the system explained to them as part of their basic training.
- **Nobody should be left in charge of a museum without a brief explanation of object entry procedures.**

## The other 20 procedures...

- Some complex, and some relatively simple
- 8 are identified as primary – but only for accreditation purposes in the UK system
- All are important
- All are related to each other
- Together they represent a common-sense, but complex structure for effective museum collection management
- So how to get started?



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## Getting Started/1 : Policy Framework

- The Collection Policy Framework will guide all further work.
- This must be in place before the procedures can be effected.

## Getting Started/2 : Data Capturing

- You do NOT require a CMS (collection management system) to get started (but it does help!)
- Can use Access or even Excel as a useful starting point
  - However, these should be used in a way that can be migrated automatically into a CMS, otherwise you may be wasting lots of time and effort!



## Getting Started/3 : Entry and Exit Controls

- **Object Entry** and **Object Exit** procedures are important to insulate the collections and to control the interface to the outside world
- These MUST be in place before an initial Inventorisation and Locations audit.

## Getting Started/4 : Locations Audit

- Controlling the movement of objects is important to ensure that the inventory is maintained in good order.
- Need to know WHERE the objects are stored and the RISKS associated with these stores.
- An initial Risk Analysis is appropriate once the Locations Audit is complete.

## Getting Started/5 : Inventorising

- You need a good inventory to commence the procedures
- THUS : Retrospective Documentation and Procedure is a key starting point to ensure you inventory is up to date.
- Inventorisation : ensuring that your records and your collections are in sync



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## What we are doing / where we fit

- Workshops and Training on SPECTRUM
- Developing and implementing the ETHER Base Collection Management System to support inventorisatation, documentation, digitisation and collection management
- Digitisation and digital repositories
- Providing world-class Visitor Experience support using Mobile Devices (SAMA Conference 2012)
- Providing Policy Development Support and Governance support

## Conclusions

- SPECTRUM is the world-wide best practice for Collection Management and it available under an open license
- SPECTRUM is not widely used in South Africa, and the ETHER Initiative is representing SPECTRUM in South Africa
- There is no barrier to commencing a programme to implement SPECTRUM in your museum.



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**End of Presentation**

Thank You



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## Further Slides not in Presentation

- I include a number of additional slides which there will not be time for, but which can complement the presentation.



## Common Procedural Units

This group lists the full set of generalised units that can be used to describe a procedure in SPECTRUM. The groups below give particular units for a procedure. If an organisation wishes to record an aspect of a procedure not listed then it should model the units it uses on these. Reference the object(s) involved using their *Object number* unit in the *Object identification information* group.

### Units of information:

***Authoriser (Per)***

***Authorisation date***

***Cost***

***Cost note***

***Procedure begin date***

***Procedure end date***

***Procedure manager (Org, Per)***

***Procedure note***

***Procedure title***

***Reason***

***Request***

***Request date***

***Requester (Org, Per)***

***Requested action date***

***Scheduled begin date***

***Scheduled end date***

***Status***

***Status date***

***Status review date***



## Details of Selected Procedures

- Due to lack of time in this presentations, only a few selected SPECTRUM procedures will be analysed in detail, and others will be identified and mentioned and placed into context.
- These will be analysed by the collection management section : Development, Documentation, Access, Care

## Collection Development : Pre-Entry Procedure

The management and documentation of the assessment of potential acquisitions before their arrival.

- TRIGGER: Notification of potential donation
- TRIGGER: Decision to purchase
- ACTION : Assign numbers
- ACTION : Record advance information
- CHECK : Legal title, IPR, storage needs, condition
- LINK : Acquisitions Policy : new objects fit
- ACTION/LINK : Condition Check
- LINK : Next – Object Entry Procedure

## Collection Development : Object entry Procedure

*The management and documentation of the receipt of objects and associated information which are not currently part of collection.*

*Any object which does not currently have an object number assigned by the receiving organisation must be dealt with within this procedure.*

- TRIGGER: Receipt of object
- ACTION: Create Entry Record (NOT Accession Register)
- ACTION: Receipt back to depositor
- LINK : Next to Object Exit, Acquisition, Loans In, Deaccession/Disposal based upon nature of items

## Collection Development : Acquisition

*Documenting and managing the addition of objects and associated information and their possible accession to the permanent collections.*

- TRIGGER: Decision to acquire
- ACTION : Condition check
- ACTION : Obtain unambiguous title to object
- ACTION : Record into accession register

## Collection Development : Deaccession and disposal

*The management of disposal (the transfer, or destruction of objects) and of deaccession (the formal sanctioning and documenting of the disposal).*

- TRIGGER: request to dispose/deaccession
- ACTION: Establish title to the object
- ACTION : Make case for disposal
- ACTION : Update documentation

## Collection Information/Documentation Procedures

**Inventory control** : *up to date information on all objects for which organisation has legal responsibility (incl. loans, unaccessioned objects, undocumented objects, ...)*

**Location and movement control** : *Documenting and managing the location and movement of objects. Every object must be in a particular location at every time.*

**Cataloguing** : *Formal process of description – provenance in particular. Single store for all relevant information.*

## Collection Information/Documentation Procedures

**Insurance and indemnity** : *Documenting and managing the insurance needs of objects both in an organisations permanent collections and those for which it is temporarily responsible.*

**Valuation control** : *Managing of information relating to the financial valuations placed on individual objects, or groups of objects, normally for insurance/indemnity purposes (GRAP 103)*

**Audit** : *Examination of objects or object information, in order to verify their location, authenticity, accuracy and relationships.*

## Collection Information/Documentation Procedures

**Rights management** : *The management and documentation of the rights associated with the objects and information for which the organisation is responsible for, in order to benefit the organisation and to respect the rights of others.*

**Object exit** : *The management and documentation of objects leaving the organisation's premises.*

**Retrospective documentation** : *The improvement of the standard of information about objects and collections to meet SPECTRUM Minimum Standard by the documentation of new information for existing objects and collections.*



## Collection Access Procedures

**Loans In** : *manage and document the borrowing of objects*

**Loans Out** : *document and manage the loan of objects*

**Use of Collections** : *The management and documentation of all users of and services based on collections and objects in the organisation – exhibition and display, education handling, research, reproduction, commercial use, ...*

## Collection Conservation and Care Procedures

**Transport** : *Management and documentation of the transport of objects for which the organisation is partially or fully responsible.*

**Object condition checking and technical assessment** : *Management and documentation of information about the make-up and condition of an object, and recommendations for its use, treatment and surrounding environment.*

**Conservation and collections care** : *Management and documentation of information about interventive and preventive conservation activities.*

## Collection Conservation and Care Procedures

**Risk management** : *Management and documentation of information relating to potential threats to an organisation's collections and the objects for which it is temporarily responsible. It includes the provision of information enabling preventive measures to be taken as well as documentation supporting disaster planning.*

**Loss and Damage** : *Managing and documenting an efficient response to the discovery of loss of, or damage to, object(s) whilst in the care of the organisation.*