

OBJECT CATALOG & SIGNIFICANCE ASSESSMENT WORKSHEET

Adapted from Significance 2.0: A Guide to Assessing the Significance of Collections, 2009

COLLECTION ID #:			
OBJECT NAME:			
DETAILS OF ACQUISITION BY THE MUSEUM:			
How acquired:			
Date acquired:			
Name of source:			
Contact details:			
PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:			
Inscriptions or Marks:			
Materials:			
Dimensions:			
Condition (mark one):	<i>excellent</i>	<i>good</i>	<i>fair</i> <i>poor</i>
MAKER DETAILS:			
Name:			
Bio Summary:			
Street / Town / Country:			
Where Made:			
When Made:	Exact Date:		or Estimated Date or Range:
Comments:			
OWNER DETAILS: <i>Include additional 'Owner Details' blocks if needed to reflect chain of provenance</i>			
Name:			
Bio Summary:			
Street / Town / Country:			
Where Object Used:			
When Object Used:	Exact Date:		or Estimated Date or Range:
Comments:			
HISTORY OF THIS OBJECT (OR OBJECTS LIKE THIS):			

OBJECT SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY: <i>See next page for explanation of significance assessment questions</i>	
Historic Significance:	
Aesthetic Significance:	
Scientific Significance:	
Social / Spiritual Significance:	
Provenance:	
Representativeness / Rarity:	
Condition:	
Interpretive Potential:	
Significance Summary Statement:	
KEYWORDS OR INDEX TERMS:	
ADDITIONAL NOTES:	
CITE SOURCES OF INFORMATION USED TO CATALOG & ASSESS OBJECT:	
CONTRIBUTORS:	
CATALOGED BY / DATE:	

SIGNIFICANCE ASSESSMENT CRITERIA QUESTIONS

*Significance assessment is a collaborative process that draws on the knowledge, skills and experience of a range of people, including donors and people in the community knowledgeable about the subject or object. Make sure you consult as widely as possible to fully understand the context, history, and significance of the object, and research more information where relevant. Use the questions to help draw out the precise qualities of the object's significance. One or more criteria may apply and criteria may be inter-related. An object may be highly significant even if only one or two criteria apply. Think of the criteria as a framework to assist you to consider and describe **how** and **why** the object is important.*

*A significance summary statement is a reasoned assessment of the meaning and importance of an object. It is more than a description of what the object looks like. A statement of significance summarizes **how** and **why** the object is important. A significance summary statement is not set in stone and may change over time. From time to time it should be reviewed as circumstances change and knowledge develops. Significance summary statements are excellent sources of information for exhibit labels and other interpretive activities.*

Historic significance

- Is it associated with a particular person, group, event or activity?
- What does it tell us about an historic theme or process or pattern of life?
- How does it contribute to our understanding of a period or place, activity, person or event?

Aesthetic significance

- Is it well designed, crafted or made?
- Is it a good example of a style, design, artistic movement or the artist's work?
- Is it original or innovative in its design?
- Is it beautiful?

Scientific or Research significance

- Do researchers have an active interest in studying the object today, or will they want to in the future?
- How is it of interest or value for science or research today or in the future?
- What things in particular constitute its scientific or research interest and research value?

Note: This criterion only applies to objects of current scientific value, or with research potential such as archaeological collections. Objects such as scientific instruments are generally of historic significance.

Social or Spiritual significance

- Is the object of particular value to an ethnic or cultural community or group today? Why is it important to them?
- How is this demonstrated? Is the object kept in the public eye? Is its meaning kept alive for the group (eg by being used in an annual a parade or ceremonies, or by maintaining traditional practices surrounding the object)?
- Has the Museum consulted the community about its importance for them?
- Is the object or collection of spiritual significance for a particular group?
- Is this spiritual significance found in the present?

Note: Social or spiritual significance only applies to objects and collections where there is a demonstrated contemporary attachment between the object and community. Items of social history interest are of historic significance. If the object has spiritual or social significance this needs to be demonstrated through consultation with the community or group.

Provenance

- Who owned, used or made the object?
- Where and how was it used?
- Is its place, or origin, well documented?

Representativeness / Rarity

- Is it a good example of its type or class?
- Is it typical or characteristic?
- Is it unusual or a particularly fine example of its type?
- Is it singular, or unique?
- Is it particularly well documented for its class or group?
- Does it have special qualities that distinguish it from other objects in the class or category?

Condition, intactness or integrity

- Is it in unusually good condition for its type?
- Is it unusually intact or complete?
- Does it show repairs, alterations or evidence of the way it was used?
- Is it still working?
- Is it in original, unrestored condition?

NOTE: In general, an object in original condition is generally more significant than one that has been restored.

Interpretive potential

- Does it help the museum tell a story?
- Can you learn something about the object's wider context and associations, or about its materials, design and function?
- How is it relevant to the museum's purpose, collection policy and exhibition program?
- Does it represent an opportunity to use some different interpretation strategies?
- Is there anything else in the collection that can tell the same story?

Significance Assessment Criteria are © Heritage Collections Council (HCC), Commonwealth of Australia, 2002

For more information about purposes and 'how-tos' of significance assessment, see Significance 2.0: A Guide to Assessing the Significance of Collections, 2009 <https://www.arts.gov.au/what-we-do/museums-libraries-and-galleries/significance-20>

REVIEWING SIGNIFICANCE 3.0 – STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE TEMPLATE

From *Reviewing Significance 3.0: A Framework for Assessing Museum, Archive, and Library Collections' Significance, Management, and Use, 2018* <https://collectionstrust.org.uk/resource/reviewing-significance-3-0/>

Used with the *Significance Assessment Grid* (next page), this template will help you construct a *Statement of Significance* for a single item, a group of related items a themed 'cluster' or material, or a whole collection. Use the tables below to collate and structure information gathered in response to the prompt questions on the *Significance Assessment Grid* (next page)

SINGLE ITEM

Item ref no.		
Short name		
Brief description		
Usual Storage/Display space		
ASSESSOR(S)		
DATE		
PURPOSE OF ASSESSMENT		
PROVENANCE / ACQUISITION		
1 GENERAL / KEY POINTS	A1	• •
2 NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL	A2	• •
3 LOCAL / REGIONAL	A3	• •
4 COMMUNITY OR GROUP	A4	• •
5 ORGNISATION / SITE SPECIFIC	A5	• •
ASSESSMENT SUMMARY		
RARITY / UNIQUENESS		
1 GENERAL / KEY POINTS	B1	• •
2 NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL	B2	• •
3 LOCAL / REGIONAL	B3	• •
4 COMMUNITY OR GROUP	B4	• •
5 ORGANISATION / SITE SPECIFIC	B5	• •
ASSESSMENT SUMMARY		
SENSORY / VISUAL QUALITY / EMOTIONAL IMPACT		
1 GENERAL / KEY POINTS	C1	• •
2 NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL	C2	• •
3 LOCAL / REGIONAL	C3	• •
4 COMMUNITY OR GROUP	C4	• •
5 ORGANISATION / SITE SPECIFIC	C5	• •
ASSESSMENT SUMMARY		

CONDITION / COMPLETENESS		
1 GENERAL / KEY POINTS	D1	• •
2 NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL	D2	• •
3 LOCAL / REGIONAL	D3	• •
4 COMMUNITY OR GROUP	D4	• •
5 ORGANISATION / SITE SPECIFIC	D5	• •
<u>ASSESSMENT SUMMARY</u>		
HISTORICAL / CULTURAL MEANING		
1 GENERAL / KEY POINTS	E1	• •
2 NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL	E2	• •
3 LOCAL / REGIONAL	E3	• •
4 COMMUNITY OR GROUP	E4	• •
5 ORGANISATION / SITE SPECIFIC	E5	• •
<u>ASSESSMENT SUMMARY</u>		
EXPLOITABILITY		
1 GENERAL / KEY POINTS	F1	• •
2 NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL	F2	• •
3 LOCAL / REGIONAL	F3	• •
4 COMMUNITY OR GROUP	F4	• •
5 ORGANISATION / SITE SPECIFIC	F5	• •
STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE		
FURTHER RESEARCH AND CONSULTATION		
OUTCOMES OF THE ASSESSMENT		
ADDITIONAL NOTES		

SIGNIFICANCE ASSESSMENT GRID - Reviewing Significance 3.0 © Caroline Reed 2018

	A PROVENANCE / ACQUISITION	B RARITY / UNIQUENESS	C SENSORY / VISUAL / EMOTIONAL IMPACT	D CONDITION / COMPLETENESS	E HISTORICAL / CULTURAL MEANING	F 'EXPLOITABILITY'
1 GENERAL / KEY POINTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do we know how/when/why / from whom it was acquired by our org? • Who created, collected, made, wrote, published, owned or used it? Is there evidence? • When/where/why/ for whom was it produced / collected? Is there evidence? • Is there a known chain of ownership and use? • Is it unusually well-provenanced / documented for its class or type? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is it unique rare or unusual? • Does it relate to an extinct or endangered species? • Is it a specimen that could not be replicated? • Is it the only / the best / a good example of its type accessible in a public collection? • Is it interesting as a characteristic example of its type? • Does it have unusual distinguishing features / annotations? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does it demonstrate technical and/or creative accomplishment? • Does it have a strong visual / sensory / emotional impact? • Was its design / style of presentation / use of language original, innovative or influential? • Do its form, colour, materials, imagery or use of language have an implicit meaning? • Could its use of language have an emotional impact? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is it intact / complete / largely in original condition? • Is it in unusually good condition for its type? • Can it be safely handled by readers / researchers / staff? • Does any wear, damage or annotation tell us about its history of use? • If altered / repaired, does this tell us about its history of ownership or use? • Has any restoration / conservation been authentic / sensitive? • If a working object, is it in working order? • Is its impact / interpretive value affected by its condition? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does it reflect or illuminate a particular theme, person, group, organisation, event, place or activity of cultural or historical significance? • Is it currently used for academic or other historical/cultural research and/or for answering enquiries? • Has it ever been loaned or requested for loan for display or research use by other heritage organisation(s)? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is public and/or research access limited or controlled (either short or long term -e.g. to protect an individual's confidentiality) • Could it be used for learning / outreach / reminiscence work? • Could it support marketing/ profile raising/ product development? • Has it, or objects of its type, been used as a source of inspiration by artists / designers / makers? •
2 NATIONAL / INTERNATIONAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does its provenance connect it to any event, person, place or theme of national / international significance? • Is its creator / collector/ creator of national / international significance? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is it the only (or one of the best) examples of its type accessible in a UK or worldwide organisation? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could it have a particularly strong emotional resonance for UK or other countries' audiences? • Do its form, colour, materials, imagery or use of language have any implicit national / international meaning? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is it in exceptionally good condition for its type in national / international collections? • Does any evidence of wear, damage, annotation, restoration or conservation tell us anything of national / international significance? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does it reflect or illuminate a theme, person, group, organisation, event, place or activity of national / international cultural or historical significance? • Could it make a significant contribution to the study of any specific discipline within the UK or internationally? • Has it ever been loaned or requested for loan for display or research use by heritage organisation(s) outside the UK? • Is it associated with a pivotal discovery or innovation in the history of science, technology or design? • Does it have significant place the development of the work of a particular artist, creative movement or school? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could it have a particular role in profile-raising for our organisation nationally / internationally?

	A PROVENANCE / ACQUISITION	B RARITY / UNIQUENESS	C SENSORY / VISUAL / EMOTIONAL IMPACT	D CONDITION / COMPLETENESS	E HISTORICAL / CULTURAL MEANING	F 'EXPLOITABILITY'
3 LOCAL / REGIONAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the provenance connect it to any event, person, place or theme of local /regional significance? Is the creator / collector/ creator of local/regional significance? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is it the only (or one of the best) examples of its type with strong regional connections, Is it the only (or one of the best) examples of its type accessible in a local / regional organisation? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is recognised as 'iconic' locally or regionally? Do its form, colour, materials, imagery or use of language have any specific local / regional meaning? Could it have a particular emotional resonance for our local / regional audiences? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does its condition or evidence of wear, damage, annotation, restoration or conservation have any locally /regionally specific significance? e.g. the way a garment was worn or a tool used? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does it reflect or illuminate a theme, person, group, organisation, event, place or activity of local / regional cultural, artistic, scientific, technological or historical significance? Could it support study of the local /regional natural environment, topography, land use, built environment, or the use of resources? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Could it have a particular role in profile-raising for our organisation locally / regionally? Could it support local /regional tourism? Could it support local or regional creative or economic activity, community cohesion, business or product development?
4 COMMUNITY OR GROUP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the provenance connect it to any event, person, place or theme relevant to a specific community or group? Is the artist, writer, designer, creator important to a specific community or group? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is it the only (or one of the best) examples of its type that reflects or illuminates a particular community or group + is accessible in a public organisation? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Could it have a particularly strong visual / sensory / emotional impact for any specific community or group? Do its form, colour, materials, imagery or use of language have a particular meaning for any specific community or group? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does its condition or evidence of wear, damage, annotation , restoration or conservation have any community specific significance? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is it an example of an object type associated with any event, person, activity, place or theme of significance to a specific community or group? Does it reflect or illuminate beliefs, ideas, customs, traditions, practices or narratives related to a specific community or group? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Could it be used to support outreach /raise our organisation's profile within a specific community or group? Could it be used to raise the profile and/or awareness of the culture or history of a specific community or group? Could it support creative or economic activity for a specific community or group?
5 ORGANISATION / SITE SPECIFIC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the provenance connect it to any event, person, place or theme relevant to our organisation's history, site, building or location? Is the creator / collector/ creator relevant to our organisation's history, site, building or location? Was the acquisition of the object/collection part of a defined collecting plan? Was the object/collection acquired with external support or funding? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is it the only (or one of the best) examples of its type in our organisation's collection? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is it popularly or traditionally regarded as an iconic' object within our collection? Does it provide a focal point for users of our building or site? Do its form, colour, materials, imagery or use of language have a particular meaning or significance in the context of our building, site, location or organisation? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What does its condition and/or any restoration / interventive conservation work tell us about its history of care and use within our organisation? Does its condition, level of completeness or evidence of wear have any site or organisationally specific significance? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does it enrich understanding of other material in our collections? Does it help to interpret aspects of our organisation's history, building, site or locality? Does it reflect or illuminate a theme, person, group, event, place or activity of cultural or historical significance to our organisation's history, site, building or locality? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does/could it have potential to raise our organisation's profile, support income generation, business or product development? Could it be used to support outreach /raise our organisation's profile within a specific target audience?