Society of Antiquaries of London

Collections Access Policy

for Museum Collections at Kelmscott Manor

Governing Body: Council (The Society of Antiquaries of London)
Policy approval date: 14 December 2023
Policy review procedure: This policy will be reviewed at least once every five years. All policy reviews and associated changes must be communicated to, and approved by, the Library and Collections Committee and Council.
Policy review date: 14 December 2028
Version: 2

This policy will be shared with internal and external stakeholders via email and will be published on our website to ensure availability to users and potential users.

Contents

1.Mission, Vision, and Strategy

Our Royal Charter from 1751, which acts as a mission statement, encapsulates the Society's purpose:

> *The encouragement, advancement and furtherance of the study and knowledge of the antiquities and history of this and other countries.*

This mission statement informs the Society's vision for 2023-2033:

> *To understand how humans live through the things that humans have created.*

This vision drives the Society's strategic aims, objectives, and priorities, which are arranged into four pillars: 1 Nourish our current and future communities, 2 Stimulate our sector, 3 Excite the world, 4 Organise to deliver. The strategy for the Library, Archive and Museum falls into pillars 2 and 3:

Pillar 2	**Stimulate our sector**
Strategic Aim	**The global independent forum on heritage**
Long term priority	**Offer catalysing resources** through our library and collections
Mid-term priorities	1. Progress digitisation and cataloguing programme to ensure that collections and documents are fully accessible, globally 2. Ensure our collections are relevant, reviewed regularly and cared for appropriately to inspire the curious and support research 3. Create an ecosystem with our community whereby research is supported and encouraged through our collections 4. Ensure our professional standards support our ambitions as a key contributor to the sector
Pillar 3	**Excite the world**
Strategic Aim	**The place where exciting new ideas are shared first**
Long term priority	**Open up our places** by opening up BH to the public and expanding our work at KM
Mid-term priorities	1. Increase our engagement with new audiences as well as Fellows and Affiliates to create a diverse and thriving community 2. Amplify recognition as a key player in the sector through exhibitions and loans to museums and galleries worldwide 3. Ensure all our communications (tone of voice) and engagement are increasingly modern and inclusive and support the diverse audiences in our community 4. Actively collaborate with like-minded organisations to support our strategic aims

2. Widening access and communication

Welcoming visitors to Kelmscott Manor is underpinned by a strategy to further expand our audiences and share our collections in ways that are inspiring, educational, and sustainable. We are committed to removing barriers that prevent people from visiting Kelmscott Manor (site, collection, events and services) so that we can share the history of Kelmscott Manor and those associated with it as widely as possible. We used the Museum Development South East's Access Review Toolkit to carry out an access audit in 2023 and this has informed our Access Policy, our Forward Plan and our Access Plan. We aim to make any reasonable adjustments possible to improve physical and intellectual access to our buildings and collections in line with the Public Sector Equality Duty and the Equality Act 2010. We will also adhere to all national and international statutes of law, including specifically in relation to access, but not exclusively the Freedom of Information Act 2000, Data Protection Act 1998, and the Disability Discrimination Act 2005. We will follow national standards, ethical codes and best practice guidelines including, but not exclusively, PAS 197:2009 *Code of practice for cultural collections management*.

Having re-opened in April 2022, Kelmscott Manor is now in Year 2 of delivering its Activity Plan, as embodied in its NLHF-funded £6million *Kelmscott and Morris: Past, Present And Future* (KMPPF) project. All physical interpretation has been devised to be as inclusive as possible, with child-friendly panels in each of the period spaces of the Manor. Delivery of the Activity Plan for formal and informal learning is led by our Learning and Outreach Officer. This includes working with schools, community organisations, and disadvantaged and marginalised groups who face barriers to cultural participation. To help facilitate contemporary responses to our historic site and collection, and to create space for new voices to be heard, we have ongoing partnerships with other organisations. These include Heritage Crafts, who are partnering with us on a 3-year Maker in Residence project, West Ox Arts, a local community arts organisation who produced an exhibition with us in Year 1 of the Activity Plan, and Prime Theatre, a Swindon-based youth arts and theatre organisation.

We promote access and we communicate and engage with our audiences through a variety of channels including our website and, more specifically, our collections portal; our social media platforms; the Society e-newsletter SALON; Fellowship News; online and in-person talks by our Curator both on- and off-site; and our exhibition and display programme.

3. Identifying user needs

The Society identifies the differing needs of users in several ways in order to provide access for them.

- We have plans to undertake training with VocalEyes to improve access for visitors with visual impairments.
- Feedback from school, family, and community groups attending outreach sessions, through evaluation forms from teachers and group organisers, facilitated creative evaluation activities for participants and verbal feedback from all parties.
- Feedback from visitors via comment cards, visitor book and email feedback

- Ongoing monitoring via visitor surveys during Open Days

4. Types of access

The Society recognises the following types of access:

4.1 Physical access at Kelmscott Manor

Today, Kelmscott Manor and its collections are accessible all year round, although most physical visits take place during the Manor's Open Season from (Apr 1 – Oct 31), during which period the site welcomes visitors Wed-Sat. We accommodate pre-booked groups, including special interest groups, each Wednesday. Thur-Sat are General Open Days, with walk-up and pre-booking options available.

In the period rooms at Kelmscott Manor visitors experience free-flow barrier-free access. In addition:

- Annual exhibitions highlight discrete areas of the collection (often those not on permanent display) and new research associated with these, and/or with themes associated with them
- Changing displays in the Old Kitchen showcase holdings from the Manor's archive
- We offer a learning and outreach programme of collections-based workshops for schools, families, and community groups. Currently we offer onsite visits for schools and community groups and are expanding a programme of offsite outreach work in schools and special access groups. Due to the Manor's rural location, to facilitate visits by school and community groups we offer a travel subsidy.
- We participate in Heritage Open Days, welcoming visitors to the Manor free of charge
- There is a reduced rate Accessible Ticket for those visitors who are unable to access the upper floors of the Manor.

There are inevitable physical limitations that come with a relatively small Grade I listed building:
- There is only step-free access to the ground floor of the Manor.
- Mobility scooters are welcome within the ground floor, but some models are too wide to navigate every ground floor space

These limitations are mitigated in a variety of ways:
- Should a visitor wish to see a specific object in the collection, or wish to study a series of objects, the Curator will assess the conservation needs of the object/s and, if feasible, make object/s available to a wheelchair user in one of the ground floor rooms or in the Learning Barn.
- Wherever possible, pre-booked visits will be adapted to suit the needs of the visitor. School and community groups are consulted in advance of their visit to ensure that all access, mobility and SEND needs are catered for, to ensure that all participants have the best possible visit in line with their needs.

4.2 Intellectual and sensory access

Information regarding Kelmscott Manor opening times, services, facilities, and access to collections is available via our website https://www.kelmscottmanor.org.uk/, our social media channels, our printed leaflets, and by telephone or email.

Large-scale interpretation panels and accessible artist's rendering of the site orientate visitors on first arrival. Externally, this is augmented by thematic interpretation panels. Inside the Manor, there are illustrated thematic interpretation panels and child-friendly interactive panels in each of the rooms.

To further facilitate intellectual access, the Steward Guide of collections information and appendices used by all volunteer room stewards is updated annually and new research findings relating to objects in the collection, or key themes/narratives, are incorporated.

We offer collections-based work experience and work placement opportunities of varying durations for school pupils or students considering a career in the heritage sector.

The Society recognises that people have different learning preferences and for exhibitions, tours, and events held at Kelmscott Manor, we aim to provide interpretation that is responsive and adaptable to these varied learning preferences where possible.

We facilitate an enhanced sensory experience for blind visitors or those with a sight impairment by ensuring that all room stewards are provided with a list of features and objects in each room that can be experienced by touch, and that this is used proactively.

We plan to introduce sensory backpacks, which will be able to be reserved in advance.

4.3 Digital access

The Society provides digital access to its collections in a variety of ways:
- Objects are gradually becoming searchable and visible through an online portal https://collections.sal.org.uk/home
- There is extensive information and images on key objects in the Collections highlights section of our website https://www.sal.org.uk/collections/explore-our-collections/collections-highlights/
- An online exhibition platform where groups of objects are brought together to tell stories https://stories.sal.org.uk/
- The Society's oil paintings at both Burlington House and Kelmscott Manor feature on the Art UK paintings website, providing the opportunity to enhance and extend accessibility to our art collection. As a free online resource this also encourages wide social access. https://artuk.org/visit/collection/society-of-antiquaries-of-london-2055
- Kelmscott Manor's collection of books formerly in the library of William Morris feature in the online resource The Library of William Morris: A Catalogue https://williammorrislibrary.wordpress.com, providing the opportunity to enhance and extend accessibility to this element of our collection. As a free online resource this also encourages wide social access.
- A 360-degree digital tour of the house is available on site for those unable to access the upper floors. It is also available on the Manor's website.
- The Society engages with a wide and diverse audience via its social media accounts, using Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and Pinterest to share activities, events, and collections. The Society also actively participates in national social media events such as #Museumweek.

4.4 Social, geographical, and financial access

The Society recognises that admission charging can act as an economic barrier to public access. Although as an independent charity with no Government funding the Society has to charge for some of its services and events in order to generate income for the care and conservation of its collections, it also ensures that economic barriers to the access and enjoyment of its collections are acknowledged and, where possible, discounts or free access are offered to key visitor/user groups or for specific services. At Kelmscott Manor the following are offered free of charge:

- Entry for essential companions
- Research visits
- Collections-based workshops for targeted schools and community groups
- All students on school visits who are in receipt of Free School Meals
- All visitors on Heritage Open Days
- Free entry to the grounds available to all

In addition, there is a reduced rate Accessible Ticket for those visitors who are unable to access the upper floors of the Manor, and reduced rate entry for students.

The Society is also committed to sharing its collections and has an active lending programme, with temporary loans from Kelmscott Manor going to national and regional museums in the UK, Europe and America. This includes loans to Tate Britain, Holburne Museum (Bath), Dovecot Studios (Edinburgh), Delaware Art Museum, Museu Nacional de Arts Antiga (Lisbon), Museum Villa Stuck (Munich), and the Musée d'Art et d'Industrie (Roubaix), among many others.

4.5 Emotional access

The Society strives to ensure that all visitors feel welcome and comfortable in our buildings, and that they receive a good standard of care and consideration.

The Society's Staff Handbook includes a section titled 'common responsibilities', which outlines its commitment to ensuring professional and personal courtesy and integrity among its staff, and towards Fellows, volunteers, members of the public and other visitors.

At Kelmscott Manor all staff are trained in how to apply the safeguarding policy and associated procedures, and is committed to ensuring the safety and welfare of children and adults at risk who visit our site or engage with our collections and activities online.

4.6 Cultural access

Basic historical and biographical information is available in several different languages; it is our intention to update and expand this resource.

5. Enquiries and research visits

The Society has guidelines for researchers who wish to visit Kelmscott Manor. All research visits need to be pre-booked in advance due to the practical constraints of space, time, the availability of staff to assist, and the need to ensure the safety and security of all objects in our care.

- The Society will aim to respond to any enquiry about the Kelmscott Manor collection within 10 working days.
- An enquirer will generally be able to secure an appointment within 20 working days of applying for research access or to view objects not on public display. It may sometimes however take up to four weeks to secure an appointment due to staff availability.

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- An enquirer with an appointment to visit for research purposes will be able to consult all available documentation (with the exception of confidential information) relating to the collections and associated archives where appropriate.

References

A number of other SAL policies outline restrictions or limitations on collections access with regards to conservation and collections care, sensitivity of materials, and the current state of collections documentation and information. The Access Policy should therefore be read in conjunction with:

- Strategic Plan for the Library, Archives, and Museums of the Society of Antiquaries of London 2023/24 to 2024/25
- 2023 KM Museum Access Plan
- 2023 BH & KM Museum Development Policy
- 2023 BH & KM Museum Documentation Policy
- 2023 KM Museum Care & Conservation Policy
- SAL Human Remains Policy
- Sensory Trust access resources, including: *Designing with clear and large print* ; *Easy access to Historic Landscapes*