



Records management and archives policy

1) Introduction

Sir John Soane's Museum recognises that its records are an essential business resource; and that their efficient management is necessary to support its core functions, to comply with its legal and regulatory obligations and to contribute to the effective overall management of the institution.

This paper sets out the policy with regard to all records created and managed by the Museum as part of its everyday business.

2) Scope

Sir John Soane's Museum has always, since it became a public museum in January 1837 following the death of its founder, kept detailed records.

The aim of this policy is to provide a framework for managing the Museum's records, to support the development of a Records Management programme and thereby minimise the risk of breaching relevant legislation (see 4. Legal Basis).

This policy applies to all records created, received, maintained and accessed by Soane Museum employees, workers, contractors and volunteers in the course of their work.

3) Definitions

A **record** is a document in any format that has been generated or received by the Soane Museum in the course of its activities and has been, or may be, used by the Museum as evidence of its actions and decisions, or because of its information content. Records can be held in any format, including, but not limited to, paper documents, photographs, electronic files, e-mails, videos, slides, audio recordings, databases or any multimedia formats.

Records Management is the strategic and systematic control of the creation, receipt, maintenance, use and disposal or preservation of records.

Archives are records selected for permanent preservation which ensure that the Museum meets its **statutory record keeping requirements** as a Non-Departmental Government Body by capturing and managing authentic and reliable records to demonstrate evidence, accountability and information about its decisions, activities and collections. Archives also protect the Museum's corporate memory, and are available as a resource for research.

4) Legal Basis

The records of Sir John Soane's Museum are subject to, and therefore will be managed in accordance with legislation, such as:

- The Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR

- The Freedom of Information Act, 2000
- The Requirements of HM Customs & Revenue

The Museum is, therefore, committed and undertakes all effort to comply with the Secretary of State's Code of Practice on the management of records issued under part 1 of section 46 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

5) Statement of Principles

General

- Sir John Soane's Museum is committed to creating, keeping and managing its records in a manner that accurately documents its principal activities.
- It is committed to maintaining essential paper and electronic records in the long term and preserve their authenticity, reliability, integrity and usability for future generations.
- It is committed to a culture of openness and access to information wherever possible, in accordance with statutory requirements.

Ownership of Records

- All records created and received by Sir John Soane's Museum in the course of its business are owned by Sir John Soane's Museum, and not by the individuals, departments or teams that create the records.
- Records should not be removed from the offices or network of Sir John Soane's Museum or used for any activity and purpose other than the Museum's official business.
- Access to records is granted by the Archivist in accordance with approved procedures. Records should be logged out and remain on Soane Museum premises at all times (exceptions to this are records approved for exhibition loan or for digitisation by an external company).
- See 8. Breach of Policy for action taken by the Museum for any unauthorised or malicious use or removal of records.

Purpose of Records Management

- Creates and captures authentic and reliable records to demonstrate evidence, accountability and information about its decisions, activities and collections.
- Maintains securely, and preserves access to, those records as long as they are required to support Museum operations, including audit purposes.
- Identifies and protects the Museum's vital records (i.e. those records which need to be retained to meet statutory record keeping requirements or which would be needed to re-establish the business of the Museum in the event of a disaster, and without which it could not operate).
- Identifies and preserves securely those records deemed worthy of permanent preservation, thus protecting the Museum's corporate memory.
- Destroys records once they are no longer required according to agreed retention schedules, thus ensuring the efficient use of Museum accommodation, electronic storage systems and compliance with legislation. The Museum maintains a detailed retention schedule with specific time periods against every section of the document.
- Meets relevant record-keeping requirements, including the Freedom of Information Act 2000, etc.

6) Responsibilities

Effective Records Management is a shared responsibility.

Senior Management is responsible for approving and promoting compliance with Records Management policies and procedures, and supporting the implementation of a Records Management programme, throughout the Museum.

The *Archivist* is responsible for delivering the operational activities of a Records Management programme, and for the development and implementation of related procedures and guidance.

The *Archivist* is responsible for the capture and management of records for permanent preservation, and for the development and implementation of related procedures and guidance.

Heads of Departments are responsible for the ongoing maintenance and compliance with record keeping procedures in their departments.

Individual employees, workers, contractors and volunteers are responsible for creating and maintaining records in accordance with best practice.

7) Procedures

The Archivist will advise on best practice and on specific issues. Training on data protection and related information access legislation is provided to new starters as part of induction.

8) Breach of Policy

Knowingly and maliciously breaching the Museum's Records Management procedures or any relevant governing legislation will be dealt with in accordance with the Museum's disciplinary procedure.

9) Review

The Records Management and Archives Policy will be reviewed at least every three years. The next scheduled review is 2028.

10) Date of Approval

Approved at the meeting of the Board of Trustees held on xx xxxxxxxx 20xx.

11) Related Policies

All policies should respect and reflect the Records and Archives Management Policy. The following have particular relevance:

- IT Acceptable Use Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Privacy Notice
- Employee Handbook
- Hybrid Working Policy

Sue Palmer
Archivist & Head of Library Services
October 2025