

THE BRITISH MUSEUM FREEDOM OF INFORMATION: PUBLICATION SCHEME

Introduction to the Freedom of Information Act

The Freedom of Information Act became law on 30 November 2000 with the aim to develop a culture of openness in government and public bodies. The Act establishes a right of access to all types of recorded information held by public authorities and imposes obligations on public authorities to disclose information, subject to a range of exemptions. In common with other public bodies, the Museum will be required to implement the Act from January 2005.

Once access rights come into force in January 2005, anyone will be able to make a request for information, although the request must be in writing (letter or e-mail). The Act gives applicants two related rights:

- \$ The right to be told whether the information exists
- \$ The right to receive the information, where possible in the manner requested

In some cases, where information is exempt from disclosure, the Museum is required to consider if the public interest in maintaining the exemption in question outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

Introduction to the British Museum's Publication Scheme

One of the aims of the Act is that all public authorities should be clear and proactive about the information they make available. Central to this is the preparation of a publication scheme which sets out:

- \$ The classes of information the Museum publishes or intends to publish
- \$ The manner in which they will be published
- \$ Whether the information is available free of charge or on payment

The British Museum's publication scheme is set out below. The aim of the publication scheme is to explain what information the Museum makes available to the public and wherever possible, to provide an easy method of accessing the information.

The information listed in the publication scheme is made available in an electronic format and/or as a hard copy. Electronic information is available via a hypertext link from the publication scheme which will direct you to the correct page on the Museum's website. The information can be downloaded free of charge.

Information in hard copy is available on request in writing from the department specified in the publication scheme.

Charges

The majority of the information listed in the publications scheme is free of charge and available from either the website or on request from the British Museum as detailed in the Scheme.

Copyright

Information which is generated by the British Museum and included in this publication scheme may be reproduced for information and personal study only. Please contact the relevant department for permission to reproduce images.

Permission to reproduce information in the publication scheme does not extend to any material which is identified as being the copyright of a third party. Authorization to reproduce such material must be obtained from the copyright holders concerned.

Procedure for making requests from January 2005

Requests for information not listed in the publication scheme should be made in writing and should provide as much detail as possible to enable Museum staff to identify the information sought. If you require the information in a particular format, for example, as a photocopy or on computer disc, this should also be stated in your application. If you have difficulty in identifying the precise information you require, or difficulty in making the application in writing, Museum staff will be pleased to help.

In general the British Museum will have to respond to requests within 20 working days. If a fee is charged, this will be calculated according to the Fees Regulations. Under the Act, fees may be charged in respect of the time spent in locating or copying records, based on a standard hourly rate. If a fee is required the enquiry will be answered within 20 working days from receipt of the fee.

The Museum's address is:

The British Museum
Great Russell Street
London WC1B 3DG

Tel: +44 (0)20 7323 8000

Code of Practice on Access to Government Information

Access rights under Freedom of Information are not available until January 2005. Until that time requests for information can be made under the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information. Under this Code, public bodies are required to supply the following information, subject to exemptions listed in Part II of the Code:

- \$ Facts and analysis relating to major policy proposals and decisions
- \$ Explanatory material on departments' dealings with the public
- \$ Reasons for administrative decisions
- \$ In accordance with the Citizens' Charter, information about how public services are run, the cost, who is in charge and what complaints and redress procedures are available and information about what services are being provided, what targets are set, what standards of service are expected and the results achieved.
- \$ Information relating to policies, actions and decisions and other matters related to areas of responsibility.

Applications for information under the Code of Practice must be in writing and should provide as much details as possible to identify the information sought. Please specify that the request is being made under the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information. The target for response to simple requests for information is 20 working days from the date of receipt. This target may need to be extended when significant search or collation of material is required.

The Code of Practice is available on the web at <http://www.lcd.gov.uk/foi/ogcode981.htm> and copies are available free of charge from the Freedom of Information and Data Protections Division, Lord Chancellor's Department, Room 912, 50 Queen Anne's gate, London SW1H 9AT

Appeals and Complaints Procedure

If you are dissatisfied with the response you have had from the Museum in respect of a request for information you may invoke the appeals and complaints procedure. The first step is to seek an internal review of the decision you have received. Requests for internal review should be submitted in writing to the Freedom of Information Officer.

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome or the handling of the internal review conducted by the Museum you may seek an independent review from the Information Commissioner for Administration (the Ombudsman) under the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information.

Requests for a review by the Information Commissioner should be made in writing directly to:

The Information Commissioner
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire SK9 5AF
Tel: 01625 545700
Fax: 01625 545510

BRITISH MUSEUM PUBLICATION SCHEME

Description	Format	Updated/ Review
1. Corporate Information		
1.1 General Information Information about the Museum and details of its management structure, together with biographies of Trustees and key senior staff.		
British Museum Act	http://www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/corporate/index.html#Governance	-
Governance Guide	http://www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/corporate/index.html#Governance	Quinquennially
Board of Trustees	http://www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/corporate/index.html#Governance	Annually
Senior Staff	http://www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/corporate/index.html#Governance	Annually
History of the British Museum	http://www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/visit/history.html	-
1.2 Objectives, Plans and Strategy The future plans and objectives of the British Museum, for the whole organisation and for individual departments.		
Annual Review	http://www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/corporate/index.html#Governance	Annually
Museum Plan	http://www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/corporate/index.html#Governance	Annually
Annual Report and Accounts	http://www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/corporate/index.html#Governance	Annually
Funding Agreement	http://www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/corporate/index.html#Governance	Triennially

1.4 Policy and Procedures

Information about the British Museum's policies and procedures.

British Museum Collections Policies- Acquisitions Display Loans Documentation Storage and Conservation	http://www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/corporate/index.html#Governance	Quinquennially
Facilities Management policies- Summary Health and Safety Policy Finance and Control Policy Public Policy	http://www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/corporate/index.html#Governance	Quinquennially
Staff policies and procedures- Human Resources Policy Data Protection Policy	http://www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/corporate/index.html#Governance	Quinquennially
Further information concerning the Freedom of Information Act 2000, Data Protection Act 1998 and the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information.	http://www.lcd.gov.uk/foi/ http://www.dataprotection.gov.uk/ http://www.hms.o.gov.uk/	Annually

1.5 Minutes

Information about the discussions of the Board of Trustees.

Minutes of Trustees- Board meetings	http://www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/corporate/index.html#Governance	28 days after approval by the Board of Trustees
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1.6 Visitor figures and information

Information about the number of visitors to the British Museum and their profile and behavior.

Details of Visitor attendance levels, including use of research facilities and attendance at educational events	http://www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/corporate/index.html#Governance	Annually
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1.7 Donors Lists of those who have given the British Museum financial and other kinds of support.		
List of patrons and of donors	http://www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/corporate/index.html#Governance	Monthly
2. Public Services Information		
2.1 Learning Services offered to educational users		
Libraries and Archives	http://www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/libraries/index.html	Monthly
Information detailing learning events	http://www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/education/index.html http://www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/corporate/index.html#Governance	Daily
Information for teachers using the British Museum	http://www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/education/index.html And free publications are available on request from the Education Department	Daily
2.2 Visitor services Information about the services available to all our visitors, opening times, how to get to the Museum and what there is to see.		
Press releases	http://www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/newsroom/current/presscurrent.html	Daily
Details of Visitor Information including Opening Hours, Access, Maps and Plans etc	http://www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/visit/index.html	Daily
2.3 Use of the reference facilities Information for those who wish to make use of any of the Museum-s reference facilities		
Information for students wishing to use the research facilities of the Museum	http://www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/visit/depts.html	Weekly

2.4 Services for institutions and other professionals

Information for professionals who wish to make use of the Museum's specialist services, or apply to work here.

Conditions of loan and information for museums wishing to borrow objects from the British Museum's collections.	http://www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/corporate/index.html#Governance and available on request from curatorial departments	Annually
List of current tenders with specifications for selected contracts.	Available on request from Contracts Department	
Specifications for all current tenders.	Available on request from Contracts Department	
Terms and conditions for contracts	Available on request from Contracts Department	
Information relating to current job opportunities	http://www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/jobs/index.html	Daily

2.5 Information for prospective Donors

Information for those who wish to support the British Museum financially: what support the British Museum is looking for and how to make a gift.

Leaflet giving information on leaving a legacy to the British Museum	http://www.thebritishmuseum.org/	Monthly
Leaflet giving information on giving to the British Museum		
Further information about the work of the Development Department and about specific campaigns	http://www.thebritishmuseum.org/	Daily
British Museum Company	http://www.britishmuseum.co.uk/	Weekly
British Museum Friends	http://www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/join/friends/index.html	Weekly

3. Collections Information

3.1 The Collections

Information about the objects in the British Museum's care, including details about what objects we hold, the techniques used in creating them and their history and context.

Information on current departmental projects	http://www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/visit/depts.html	Daily
Information on the Museum's collections	http://www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/visit/depts.html http://www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/compass/ http://www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/newsroom/current/jenningsdog.html	Daily
Lists of current publications including exhibition catalogues and occasional papers	http://www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/corporate/index.html#Governance Or on request from BMCo	Annually

3.2 Research and Conservation

Information about the care of objects in the British Museum's collection and information about best practice in the care of similar objects.

Information on Conservation and Research work undertaken by staff at the Museum.	http://www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/corporate/index.html#Governance	Annually
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Freedom of Information Exemptions

1. Table of Information which may be exempt from disclosure

INFORMATION	EXEMPTIONS WHICH MAY APPLY
Collections	
Anonymous donors or lenders	Section 40 (2) Personal information Section 41 Information provided in confidence
Archival collections	Section 21 Information reasonably accessible Section 40 (2) Personal information Section 41 Information provided in confidence
Collections acquisition planning	Section 36 Prejudice to effective conduct of public affairs
Collections records referring to comparative examples in private collections	Section 40 (2) Personal information Section 41 Information provided in confidence
Investigation of damage, loss or theft	Section 31 Law enforcement
Object storage locations	Section 36 Prejudice to effective conduct of public affairs Section 38 Health and safety
Opinions on privately-owned objects	Section 40 (2) Personal information Section 41 Information provided in confidence
Research papers	Section 22 Information intended for future publication
Valuations and other information on privately-owned objects on loan	Section 37 (1)(a) Communication with Royal Family and Household Section 40 (2) Personal information
Development and public affairs	
Anonymous financial donations or bequests	Section 41 Information provided in confidence
Applications for grants	Section 36 Prejudice to effective conduct of public affairs
Negotiations with potential donors or sponsors	Section 36 Prejudice to effective conduct of public affairs Section 40 (2) Personal information Section 41 Information provided in confidence

Internal policy and administration	
Accident investigation	Section 31 Law enforcement
Contractual matters: records of live contracts	Section 43 Commercial interests
Minutes of meetings which records personal, contractual or confidential work-in-progress issues	Section 36 Prejudice to effective conduct of public affairs Section 40 (2) Personal information Section 43 Commercial interests
Personal staff files	Section 31 Law enforcement Section 40 (2) Personal information Section 41 Information provided in confidence
Royal Family visits etc.	Section 37 (1)(a) Communication with Royal Family and Household
Security of the building and collections	Section 31 Law enforcement
Work-in-progress files, reports or strategic plans	Section 31 Law enforcement Section 36 Prejudice to effective conduct of public affairs Section 43 Commercial interests
Other third-party data	
Advice to government departments on personal taxation and chattels	Section 40 (2) Personal information Section 41 Information provided in confidence
Mailing lists and databases	Section 40 (2) Personal information Section 41 Information provided in confidence
Security assessments of other institutions	Section 36 Prejudice to effective conduct of public affairs