



Hong Kong Maritime Museum 香港海事博物館

Collections Development Policy

2025-2029

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Name of museum:

Hong Kong Maritime Museum

Name of governing body:

Hong Kong Maritime Museum is run by the Hong Kong Maritime Museum Limited Board of Directors on behalf of the Hong Kong Maritime Museum Trust, a registered charity.

Date on which this policy was approved by governing body:

Approved: Curatorial & Collections Committee, 26 March 2025

Endorsed: Board of Directors, 22 May 2025

Approved: Board of Trustees, 29 May 2025

Policy review procedure:

The collections development policy will be published and reviewed from time to time, at least once every five years.

Date at which this policy is due for review:

January 2029

The Hong Kong Maritime Museum Limited Board and Hong Kong Maritime Museum Trust will be notified of any changes to the collections development policy, and the implications of any such changes for the future of collections.

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1. Relationship to other policies/ plans of the organisation:

1.1. The museum's statement of purpose is:

Vision

To be recognised globally as the leading maritime museum in the Asia Pacific region that inspires people's appreciation of their relationship with the sea.

Mission

As a maritime museum we preserve, showcase and commemorate the maritime culture and experiences of the people of Hong Kong; rooted in China, but looking to the world. We achieve this in the following ways:

- We promote engagement with the maritime heritage and contemporary marine environment of Hong Kong and southern China, placing it within its national and international narratives.
- We project a sense of social responsibility through collaboration, networking, and community engagement.
- We preserve the diversity of maritime culture, and peoples' relationship with the sea through our collecting and stories.
- We provide outstanding and inclusive museum experiences through academic research, educational programmes, displays, and outreach for public benefit.

1.2. The governing body will ensure that both acquisition and disposal are carried out openly and with transparency.

1.3. By definition, the museum has a long-term purpose and holds collections in trust for the benefit of the public in relation to its stated objectives. The governing body therefore accepts the principle that sound curatorial reasons must be established before consideration is given to any acquisition to the collection, or the disposal of any items in the museum's collection.

1.4. Acquisitions outside the current stated policy will only be made in exceptional circumstances.

1.5. The museum recognises its responsibility, when acquiring additions to its collections, to ensure that care of collections, documentation arrangements and use of collections will meet the requirements of international standards. This includes using Spectrum primary procedures for collections management. It will take into account limitations on collecting imposed by such factors as staffing, storage and care of collection arrangements.

1.6. The museum will undertake due diligence and make every effort not to acquire, whether by purchase, gift, bequest or exchange, any object or specimen unless the governing body or responsible officer is satisfied that the museum can acquire a valid title to the item in question.

1.7. In exceptional cases, disposal may be motivated principally by financial reasons. The method of disposal will therefore be by sale and the procedures outlined below will be followed. In cases where disposal is motivated by financial reasons, the governing body will not undertake disposal unless it can be demonstrated that all the following exceptional circumstances are met in full:

The disposal will significantly improve the long-term public benefit derived from the remaining collection; the disposal will not be undertaken to generate short-term revenue (for example to meet a

budget deficit); the disposal will be undertaken as a last resort after other sources of funding have been thoroughly explored; extensive prior consultation with sector bodies has been undertaken; the item under consideration lies outside the museum's established core collection.

2. History of the collections

The Hong Kong Maritime Museum was founded in October 2003 after Mr Anthony J. Hardy, a past Chairman of Hong Kong Shipowners Association, proposed setting one up to members of HKSOA and later to the wider Hong Kong shipping community. Invaluable support from the Hong Kong Government meant the first location for the Museum was in Stanley on the south side of Hong Kong Island, displaying objects across the two ground floor rooms of Murray House. In 2013, with further support from the Government that included a redevelopment grant, the Museum moved to new premises at Pier 8, Central Hong Kong, where it occupies four levels on two full and two half floors. On three of the floors there are galleries that tell the stories of Chinese maritime history, Hong Kong's maritime world, and marine science through the Swire Marine Discovery Centre.

The collections cover all types of objects, as well archival material and library books. They are, like many museums, a mixture of acquired and loaned collection items from a variety of sources, including individuals and companies. Rather more than half of the early collection was purchased by Anthony Hardy on behalf of the new museum. It was supplemented by an additional 26% of loans and 13% of donations both from Anthony Hardy's personal collection and from many generous supporters of the museum. Anthony Hardy's wife, Susan Chen Hardy (the well-known art collector and dealer Sze Yuan Tang), also donated and loaned important pieces to the Museum to support its gallery narratives. Over the years, the collection has increased via additional purchases, mostly at auctions held all over the world, and by further donations, some by Hong Kong based shipping companies in the form of models of vessels in their fleets, others by individuals and organizations working in Hong Kong's maritime world.

Initially the nature and quantity of items acquired for the collections was predominantly driven by the storylines of the two galleries in Murray House. Once Murray House was open, within the modest acquisitions budget, attention shifted to finding objects that would enable the museum to tell a more comprehensive maritime story, as well as offering substitutes for items on display that needed resting or conservation. By the end of 2007, it was becoming clear that a move to larger premises would be inevitable in the short term. In consequence attention shifted to ensuring the acquisition of the additional items that would allow the museum to tell the more comprehensive stories that would feature in any larger premises. This initially resulted in a doubling of the collection. The ratio of purchases and gifts to loans changed significantly from the 3:1 ratio when the museum first opened to a ratio of 6:1 at the end of 2009. By that date the premises of the new, much larger museum at Pier 8 had been secured, the project was definitely underway and the tempo of acquisition significantly accelerated, leading to a collection, when the new premises opened in 2013, some four to five times larger than it had been when the museum first opened.

3. An overview of current collections

The Museum's varied collection is indicative of how interdisciplinary maritime history is and how the stories can be told through objects. Below is a brief synopsis of the collections grouped by taxonomy/type with examples.

3.1. Art

This collection highlights key pieces that showcase southern China's maritime history, including a collection of 19th century ship portraits. Notable works include the four 'Gentiloni' paintings of Macau, Guangzhou, Whampoa, and Zhaoqing, alongside the 13 Hong painting of Canton from the 1770s. Portraits of figures like Lord Macartney and Howqua (Wu Bingjian) add a personal dimension. Other paintings capture Guangzhou's evolution as a hub for East-West trade until the 1840s, with export market-focused depictions of sailing and steamships. A standout is the 18-metre scroll 'Pacifying the South China Seas,' narrating Bailing's (Governor of Guangdong and Guanxi) success in combating piracy during the early 19th century, exemplifying its rich maritime legacy.

3.2. Decorative Arts

Furniture – The Museum holds a number of pieces of furniture that are both export, such as a 1730s lacquered chair, and made for the colonial market, like the rattan and wicker mid-19th century verandah chair and 1870s sedan chair. More practical maritime items include an 18th century Dutch East India Company sea chest, a camphorwood lap desk, and a lacquer davenport writing desk.

Fans – a small group of fans that include an early one from about 1725 with a maritime scene, a 1780s and an 1815 fan showing the Canton factories, an 1862 Tongzhi period fan depicting Wuhan River, Silverware and tableware – the Museum has a collection of P&O cutlery from the 1930s, a P&O vegetable dish from the 1890s, and even faked silver spoons with false hallmarks.

The collection also includes items like an early display screen of Guangzhou (Canton), predating the 1690s and Western shipping arriving in the Pearl River.

3.3. Ship models

The Museum's ship model collection includes shipbuilder's models, private creations, and commercially produced replicas of historic vessels, based on frescoes, woodcuts, and other sources. Many reflect the Museum's ties to shipping industry sponsors, with strong representation of the mid to late 20th century. The collection features models of 19th-century sailing ships like tea and opium clippers and a large-scale model of the Keying junk that sailed from Hong Kong to Britain via New York (1846–47). It also includes topographical models of locations such as the Lamont & Hoppe Docks at Aberdeen and Taikoo Dockyard, showcasing Hong Kong's maritime history.

3.4. Ceramics

The collection of ceramics is varied. It not only covers objects with maritime themes depicted, but also represented porcelain created for the export market to the West and India. Some of the collection is from shipwrecks, encrusted with coral and shells, while others are in new condition created specifically for aristocratic families. They cover the Song to the Qing Dynasties and illustrate the significance of porcelain to China's export market over many centuries.

3.5. Clothing and textiles

There are few objects within this category in the collections. They reflect specific people and their stories, such as Philo Norton McGiffin the US naval officer who served in the Chinese navy in the 1880s, diving equipment to discuss underwater archaeology and salvage, and clothing that illustrate maritime themes like the 19th century waistcoat with its embroidered steamer motifs.

3.6. Weapons and Ordnance

This is a small collection of items that include Royal Navy pattern and East India Company swords and a dagger, as well as a Chinese sword from 1881. Other items in this category include a Chinese 'General' cannon and swivel gun, a musket, flintlock pistol, signal and flare pistols, as well as the machine gun mounting from a marine police launch.

3.7. Navigational equipment

The Museum holds few navigational items, but they include, compasses, globes, an octant from the 1830s, a number of sextants including one reputedly owned by Captain Brewer of Rhode Island, a dipleidoscope, as well as a 1990s GPS receiver. There is also a Furuno Navigational Echo Sounder and JRC Sounder in the collection.

3.8. Coins and medals

he collection features a diverse array of coins, including a commemorative coin of the junk Keying's 1848 London visit after its Hong Kong to UK voyage. It includes foreign coins like Mexican 'Eagle' dollars, Austrian silver coins from the 1780s, British silver dollars from India, Japanese, and Dutch East India coins. Chinese sycee silver ingots, Republic of China dollar coins (1912–49), and Song Dynasty Chinese coins, with earlier and later period examples, also appear. Additionally, 20th-century medals commemorate conflicts from the World Wars to Korea, reflecting Hong Kong personnel's Royal Navy service. The Hong Kong Marine Police are represented with medal ribbons.

4. Archival holdings

4.1. The Hong Kong Maritime Museum's archival holdings reflect the stories that the museum tells and in some cases is the product of a traditional collecting remit.

4.2. The range of material regarded as archival includes a collection of original Admiralty charts, supplemented by other hydrographic office charts (e.g. Australia). There is also a collection of photographic negatives, prints, albums and microfilms that cover from the late 19th century into the mid-20th.

4.3. The archival side is a mixture of volumes and as individual items covering business and personal correspondence, certificates, logbooks and diaries, and official staff records. It should be noted that this has been recorded in the same format as the object collections, including the Object ID reference.

4.4. There is a small ephemera collection of posters and leaflets reflecting publicity material created by the shipping industry to advertise its business to clients and potential passengers, and stamps.

5. Themes and priorities for future collecting

5.1. While grounded in history, collections will also look to the future with contemporary collecting within the themes laid out below in 5.3. This will also include seeking to create an oral history archive around the maritime stories of Hong Kong and its development.

5.2. The collections will focus on Hong Kong and its people, ensuring the stories remain relevant and relatable. New acquisitions will encompass diverse object types, centred on their narratives. These will include items created in or for Hong Kong markets or crafted for export, underscoring Hong Kong's role in global trade. New stories, yet to be explored by the Museum, will play a crucial role in showcasing

the rich maritime diversity of Hong Kong.

5.3. Priority collecting themes for this period (2025–2029) are laid out below, guided by both the Museum’s Mission and that of the Swire Marine Discovery Centre, as well as areas of current interest identified by the Museum. They aim to tie Hong Kong’s story to its mainland China and global context.

5.3.1. Marine science & sustainability

Sustainability

Climate change impact

Marine biodiversity

Marine science research and technology

5.3.2. Maritime technology & safety

Navigation

Technological change – decarbonisation of the industry; shipping safety

5.3.3. Hong Kong’s maritime story

Migration

Maritime industries; ship owners

War and Piracy

Foreign occupation

Local maritime culture, sports, and heritage

Local religious beliefs, festivals and traditions

5.3.4. South China’s maritime history

Early ship technology

Early trade routes and exploration

Early Western encounters and exchange

Maritime culture and heritage

5.3.5. Creative responses

Maritime themes, events or objects as artistic inspiration

5.4. The Museum will not acquire objects that do not have a Hong Kong-related story, although objects may be bought and used with a prop status. For instance, generic military and naval subjects, underwater archaeology without a provenance to Hong Kong and southern China trade, generic classes of objects without a relevant connection (e.g. anchors, models, ships and boats).

6. Themes and priorities for rationalisation and disposal

6.1. The museum recognises that the principles on which priorities for rationalisation and disposal are determined will be through a formal review process that identifies which collections are included and excluded from the review. The outcome of review and any subsequent rationalisation will not reduce the quality or significance of the collection and will result in a more useable, well managed collection.

6.2. The procedures used will meet professional standards. The process will be documented, open and transparent. There will be clear communication with key stakeholders about outcomes and processes.

6.3. Criteria used to identify items for potential disposal are as follows:

- Items that fall outside the Collections Development Policy, are not relevant to the Museum's mission, and whose public accessibility is better served elsewhere.
- Duplicate items, even after considering their provenance and potential use.
- Replica and prop items that have been (mistakenly) acquired into the collection
- Items in poor condition that have lost their usefulness and beyond economical conservation.
- Items that have no potential for research or display
- Items that pose a health and safety risk, including items that need to comply with legislation.
- Items that have ethical or moral issues that lead to consideration for deaccessioning. This can include wrongfully taken in time of conflict, stolen, illicitly traded or exported. The Museum will follow due diligence to ensure it maintains an open, auditable process.

7. Legal & ethical framework for acquisition and disposal of items

7.1. Acquisitions and disposals will follow as closely as possible internationally recognised museum guidelines to ensure high ethical principles and to facilitate overseas collaboration through the sharing of similar standards.

7.2. Recommendations for acquisition are made to the Curatorial & Collections Committee, who have delegated authority from the Board of Trustees via the Board of Directors. However, the Board of Directors is to oversee the process if there are significant considerations around the financial value, sensitivity or historical importance of the potential acquisition.

7.3. Recommendations for disposal follow the same procedures as acquisition, except that all must be approved by the Curatorial & Collections Committee, Board of Directors, and Board of Trustees.

7.4. The Museum will undertake relevant due diligence, making every effort not to acquire any object unless it is satisfied that it can acquire valid title.

7.5. The museum will not acquire any object unless it is satisfied that the object or specimen has not been acquired in, or exported from, its country of origin (or any intermediate country in which it may have been legally owned) in violation of that country's laws.

7.6. In accordance with the provisions of the UNESCO 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, and *The Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Cultural Relics* (revised November 2024), the museum will reject any items that have been illicitly traded.

7.7. The Museum will follow the International Congress of Maritime Museums' *Åland Accord – Statement of Code of Ethics for Maritime Museums*, as approved in 2019, regarding the archaeological recovery of maritime cultural heritage.

8. Collecting policies of other museums

8.1. The museum will take account of the collecting policies of other museums and other organisations collecting in the same or related areas or subject fields. It will consult with these organisations where

conflicts of interest may arise or to define areas of specialism. However, the HKMM will still make a decision based on its own requirements as agreed by the relevant committees and boards.

8.2. Specific reference is made to the following Hong Kong and Greater Bay area museum(s) / organisation(s), although there are other institutions that will be consulted as required:

- Hong Kong Heritage Museum
- Hong Kong History Museum
- Hong Kong Museum of Art
- M+ Museum
- Hong Kong Museum of the War of Resistance and Coastal Defence
- Macau Maritime Museum
- Guangzhou Maritime Museum
- Guangdong (Provincial) Museum

9. Acquisition process

9.1. The Museum recognises its responsibility when making acquisitions to ensure that care of collections, documentation and use of collections will meet international museum standards. This includes using Spectrum primary procedures. It will consider limitations on collecting imposed by staffing, storage and conservation.

9.2. Objects will be considered for acquisition by the Museum in any of the following ways: gift (including transfers from other museums), sale, and bequest.

9.3. Objects will be acquired where possible without conditions; only under exceptional circumstances will items be accepted with conditions attached.

9.4. All efforts to ensure Intellectual Property Rights (or relevant permissions) are acquired along with the item. Where this is otherwise it will be made clear and reflected in the documentation.

9.5. Objects will not be accepted under this Collections Development Policy if they are to be non-collection 'prop' items or part of a handling collection. These are managed through a different process.

9.6. Acquisitions outside the current policy will only be made in exceptional circumstances, and only after proper consideration by the relevant Museum bodies, having regard to the interests of other museums.

9.7. All acquired objects with relevant part numbers will be recorded on the Museum's Collections Management System. Valuations will be updated to reflect changes (e.g. auctions) for insurance.

Acquisition decision-making process

9.10. Decisions on accepting objects in the Museum's collection will be taken on behalf of the Trustees of the Hong Kong Maritime Museum by the Board of Directors and Curatorial & Collections Committee, advised by relevant committee members from the Education Committee and the Curatorial Team. Exceptions to this process will be for objects of high value, significance or sensitivity, when the Board of Trustees will be directly involved.

9.11. Under the Museum's delegation policy, the authority to acquire is delegated to the Curatorial & Collections Committee, as advised by the curatorial team following due process. For objects with a total cost above that delegated level, the decision requires approval from the Board of Directors. In cases requiring a quick decision, the Chief Executive/Director will seek a decision from the Deputy Directors, Chair of the Curatorial & Collections Committee, and Director of the Board.

9.12. The Museum will assess objects for acquisition by applying the same criteria whatever their size, content, value and method of acquisition. Other factors taken into account will include:

- Significance
- Proposed use
- Direct and associated costs
- Funding availability
- Condition
- Provenance
- Special Conditions
- Collecting policies of other institutions

10. Human remains

10.1. The museum does not hold nor intends to acquire any human remains.

11. Biological and geological material

11.1. So far as biological and geological material is concerned, the museum will not acquire by any direct or indirect means any specimen that has been collected, sold or otherwise transferred in contravention of any national or international wildlife protection or natural history conservation law or treaty of any country, except with the express consent of an appropriate outside authority.

12. Archaeological material

12.1. The museum will not acquire archaeological material (including excavated ceramics) in any case where the governing body or responsible officer has any suspicion that the circumstances of their recovery involved a failure to follow the appropriate legal procedures.

12.2. The Museum will not acquire archaeological material, including underwater archaeology where the Board of Directors and Board of Trustees have any suspicion that the circumstances of their recovery involved a failure to follow the appropriate legal procedures. In the case of underwater archaeology, the Museum will abide by the UNESCO 2001 Convention on the Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage.

13. Spoliation

13.1. The museum will use the statement of principles 'Spoliation of Works of Art during the Nazi, Holocaust and World War II period', issued for non-national museums in 1999 by the Museums and Galleries Commission.

14. Disposal Procedures

14.1. All disposals will be undertaken with reference to the Spectrum primary procedures on disposal.

14.2. The governing body will confirm that it is legally free to dispose of an item. Agreements on disposal made with donors will also be taken into account.

14.3. When disposal of a museum object is being considered, the museum will establish if it was acquired with the aid of an external funding organisation. In such cases, any conditions attached to the original grant will be followed. This may include repayment of the original grant and a proportion of the proceeds if the item is disposed of by sale.

14.4. When disposal is motivated by curatorial reasons the procedures outlined below will be followed and the method of disposal may be by gift, sale, exchange or as a last resort – destruction.

14.5. The decision to dispose of material from the collections will be taken by the governing body only after full consideration of the reasons for disposal. Other factors including public benefit, the implications for the museum's collections and collections held by museums and other organisations collecting the same material or in related fields will be considered. Expert advice will be obtained and the views of stakeholders such as donors, researchers, local and source communities and others served by the museum will also be sought.

14.6. A decision to dispose of a specimen or object, whether by gift, exchange, sale or destruction (in the case of an item too badly damaged or deteriorated to be of any use for the purposes of the collections or for reasons of health and safety), will be the responsibility of the governing body of the museum acting on the advice of professional curatorial staff, if any, and not of the curator or manager of the collection acting alone.

14.7. Once a decision to dispose of material in the collection has been taken, priority will be given to retaining it within the public domain. It will therefore be offered in the first instance, by gift or sale, directly to other museums likely to be interested in its acquisition.

14.8. The announcement relating to gift or sale will indicate the number and nature of specimens or objects involved, and the basis on which the material will be transferred to another institution. Preference will be given to expressions of interest from other museums. A period of at least two months will be allowed for an interest in acquiring the material to be expressed. At the end of this period, if no expressions of interest are received, the museum may consider disposing of the material to other interested individuals and organisations giving priority to organisations in the public domain.

14.9. Any monies received by the museum governing body from the disposal of items will be applied solely and directly for the benefit of the collections. This normally means the purchase of further acquisitions. In exceptional cases, improvements relating to the care of collections in order to meet or exceed requirements relating to the risk of damage to and deterioration of the collections may be justifiable. Any monies received in compensation for the damage, loss or destruction of items will be applied in the same way.

14.10. The proceeds of a sale will be allocated so it can be demonstrated that they are spent in a

manner compatible with the requirements of the museum standards. Money must be restricted to the long-term sustainability, use and development of the collection

14.11. Full records will be kept of all decisions on disposals and the items involved and proper arrangements made for the preservation and/or transfer, as appropriate, of the documentation relating to the items concerned, including photographic records where practicable in accordance with Spectrum procedure on deaccession and disposal.

15. Disposal by exchange

15.1. The nature of disposal by exchange means that the museum will not necessarily be in a position to exchange the material with another museum. The governing body will therefore ensure that issues relating to accountability and impartiality are carefully considered to avoid undue influence on its decision-making process.

15.2. In cases where the governing body wishes for sound curatorial reasons to exchange material directly with another museum, with other organisations or with individuals, the procedures in paragraphs 14.1-5 will apply.

15.3. If the exchange is proposed to be made with a specific museum, other museums which collect in the same or related areas will be directly notified of the proposal and comments will be requested.

15.4. Both the notification and announcement must provide information on the number and nature of the specimens or objects involved both in the museum's collection and those intended to be acquired in exchange. A period of at least two months must be allowed for comments to be received. At the end of this period, the governing body must consider the comments before a final decision on the exchange is made.

16. Disposal by destruction

16.1. If it is not possible to dispose of an object through transfer or sale, the governing body may decide to destroy it.

16.2. It is acceptable to destroy material of low intrinsic significance (duplicate mass-produced articles or common specimens that lack significant provenance) where no alternative disposal method is found.

16.3. Destruction is also an acceptable method of disposal in cases where an object is in extremely poor condition, has high associated health and safety risks or is part of an approved destructive testing request identified in an organisation's research policy.

16.4. Where necessary, specialist advice will be sought to establish the appropriate method of destruction. Health and safety risk assessments will be carried out by trained staff where required.

16.5. The destruction of objects should be witnessed by an appropriate member of the museum workforce. In circumstances where this is not possible, e.g. the destruction of controlled substances, a certificate should be obtained and kept in the relevant object history file.

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Collections Development Policies from other museums.