Wellcome Collection

Access Policy
2018–2023

wellcome

Table of Contents

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to set out Wellcome Collection's commitment to maximising access to our museum and library, and to identify the ways in which we achieve this across the organisation.

2. Scope

This Access Policy relates to all collections held by Wellcome Collection as well as our services, activities, facilities, content and programmes onsite, off-site and online. It is published online at wellcomecollection.org

3. Related policies, legislation and guidance

Wellcome Collection's Access Policy is guided by relevant ethical codes and legislation:

- Equality Act, 2010.
- Charities Act, 2006.
- Data Protection Act, 2018
- Public Records Act, 1958.
- Copyright Act, 1998.
- Freedom of Information Act, 2000 (as an independent charity, Wellcome is not subject to the FOI Act; however, this Policy has been drafted in the spirit of that legislation. In addition, any information we share with a public body may have to be released if an FOIA request is made to that body).

The Museums Association's code of ethics guidelines provides a useful overview of museums' responsibilities to maximise access in the broadest sense: https://www.museumsassociation.org/ethics/code-of-ethics

We are also guided by:

- Code of Professional Ethics, Archives and Records Association, 2016.
- Code of Ethics for Museums, ICOM, 2004.
- Ethical Principles and Code of Professional Practice for Library and Information Professionals, CILIP, 2004.
- ICA Code of Ethics, 1996.

A number of organisations provide specialist advice, in particular:

- Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) – www.rnib.org.uk.
- Action on Hearing Loss (formerly RNID) – www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk.
- Mencap – www.mencap.org.uk.
- Web Accessibility Initiative – www.w3.org/WAI.

3.1　Related policies and strategies

- **Collections Development Policy**.
- **Loans In Policy**.
- **Loans Out Policy**.
- **Object Entry Policy**.
- **Object Exit Policy**.
- **Wellcome Collection Safeguarding Policy**.
- **Visitor Care Statement**.
- **Audience Development Strategy**.
- **Wellcome Collection Forward Plan**.
- **Access Strategy, Audit & Plan**.

4. Responsibilities

We aim to embed accessibility at the heart of our organisation and in everything we do. Responsibility for ensuring that Wellcome Collection meets its obligations under the Equality Act, 2010 is held by the Wellcome Collection Leadership Team. However, it is owned and driven by every member of staff, championed throughout the entire organisation, and supported by staff skills development and management. It is our ambition to embed access and inclusion into all our roles, plans, projects and programmes.

Enquiries about this policy should be directed to the policy owner (see back page).

5. Our vision

Wellcome Trust believes that good health makes life better, and our overarching vision is to improve health for everyone by helping great ideas to thrive.

Wellcome Collection's vision is to be a place that challenges the way we all think and feel about health by connecting science, medicine, life and art. We aim to be recognised as a world-leading museum and library that is a cultural ambassador for Wellcome and its principles: "we make it count", "we act boldly", "we stretch ourselves" and "we pull together".

To achieve our vision, we have set key objectives and actions which will guide us over the next five years. The vision for Wellcome Collection was approved by Wellcome's Board of Governors in December 2016.

To achieve our vision, our main goals are to

- Make thought provoking content that encourages everyone to reflect on what it means to be healthy and human.
- Create opportunities for people to think deeply about the connections between medicine, science, life and art.
- Seek out and preserve different perspectives through our collections and research.

6. Definition of terms

6.1 Access

We consider access to mean the opportunity to engage with our public spaces, collections, content activities and expertise, onsite and online, in a range of ways.

There are a number of key barriers to access:

- **Attitudinal** – a lack of interest in, or awareness of, the museum and library, the subjects and issues we deal with, or our programmes and services.
- **Language and Learning** – a feeling that the museum and library is too specialist in its approach to subjects and how they are presented; learning disabilities which affect the ability to engage with the museum; not be able to read or speak English.
- **Cultural** – the museum and library is not relevant and does not reflect particular cultural or social heritages or interests.
- **Economic** – Wellcome Collection is free, but not all can afford the travel and associated costs to visit the museum and library or take part in our programmes.
- **Geographic** – the museum and library are too far away to visit.
- **Physical and Sensory** – physical disabilities, limited mobility, or hearing or visual impairments prevent access to the museum and library, our website, social media channels or programmes.
- **Technological** – poor or no internet connectivity, or low digital literacy; reliant on assistive software to engage with our collections and programmes or interact with screen-based technologies.
- **Legal** – access may be restricted by legislation, most commonly statutory protections for personal data, or by common law principles, including medical and business confidentiality, and legal professional privilege.

6.2 Audiences/users/visitors

We define audiences as individuals and groups who engage with and make use of, or might potentially engage with and make use of, the museum and library's collections, resources, services, activities, facilities, content and programmes onsite, off-site and online.

6.3 Collections

Our collections comprise of Core Collections (visual and material culture, printed and published rare materials and archives and manuscripts) and Support Collections (auxiliary material, reserve collection, printed and published reference collection and digital reference collection). Further information about our collections can be found in the **Collections Development Policy**.

7. Our commitment to providing access

Wellcome Collection is committed to maximising access for everyone. We do everything we can, within the limitations of our building, technology and other resources, to offer the widest, richest, most engaging access for all our users. Wellcome Collection recognises that access is a complex issue that must be addressed through the actions of the organisation. We also recognise that imbedding an inclusive approach across the organisation will not only benefit those with specific needs but that everyone benefits from services, processes and programmes designed well and with access in mind.

Over the next five years, our main aims to develop our audience and increase access are:

Aim 1:   Improve accessibility to our programmes, content and collections (digital, audience, interpretation and physical)

We will work to reduce barriers to accessing our collections. As we implement our new Audience Development Strategy, we will focus on clear audience and outcome goals, tailoring engagement to different audience needs, motivations and engagement with content. We will also develop and pilot robust audience-focused prioritisation techniques for cataloguing and digitisation to help our audience access our programmes, content and collections. We will continue to digitise our collections and design and develop our website and API to improve discoverability and access.

Aim 2:   Create outstanding user-centric experiences that increase use of our content and services

We will create experiences accessible to all, encouraging a broad and diverse audience to critically engage with health. A key focus will be to build online audiences for our digital content, which will be developed for our new digital platform. This will happen alongside the development of a library experience and engagement strategy which will enable people to understand health and its social and cultural contexts and to feel emotionally connected to our content.

Aim 3:   Extend our impact and reach through digital, broadcast, publishing and touring

Extending our reach will diversify the audience exploring ideas about health through our collections, programmes and content. Building on the work of the Library Transformation Project, we are designing and building a consolidated website. We will develop and deliver an audience-focused schedule of editorial content on the Wellcome Collection website to challenge, inspire and engage with the world about the world, to share ideas and reach both the academic and curious public with different thoughts, arguments and perspectives about health.

Through touring, lending, publishing and broadcasts, we will ensure our collections and ideas reach audiences nationally and internationally.

8. How we provide access

Wellcome Collection is committed to providing access in ways which treats all users with courtesy and care. Our Visitor Care Statement can be found here: https://wellcomecollection.org/visit-us/visitor-care-statement

Wellcome Collection provides access to its collections, themes and services in a variety of ways across a range of platforms:

- Permanent and temporary exhibitions and interpretation.
- Lending and borrowing.
- National and international touring exhibition programme.
- Research access.
- Online access to:
  o Narrative content, including articles, audio and video.
  o Catalogue search tools to find materials and objects from the collections.
  o Over 30 million digital images of books, manuscripts, artworks and archives, openly licensed through Creative Commons.
  o Content that enhances a visit to an exhibition.
- Social media platforms.
- Copying and reproduction.
- Publications.
- Onsite engagement activities such as tours, discussions and object handling.
- Youth engagement programmes.
- School engagement programmes.
- Events and live programmes.
- Broadcast collaborations.
- Licensed merchandise.
- Tailor-made courses centred on the collections for undergraduate courses from diverse academic and practice-based disciplines.
- Tailor-made research support for cultural and creative producers from a wide range of backgrounds.

We are committed to carrying out a programme of access audits, including mystery shopper visits and specific audits for areas such as facilities and exhibitions. This will highlight both successes and areas for improvement and identify current best practice we should be aiming for, in turn informing strategic development and forward planning. This programme of audits will take place approximately every two to three years.

Further details of how we are working towards maximising access and future strategic plans can be found in Wellcome Collection's **Access Strategy: Audit & Plan**.

9. Understanding the needs of our visitors and users, and developing audiences

Our existing and developmental visitors, users, communities and stakeholders are defined in our **Audience Development Strategy** and **Forward Plan**.

Wellcome Collection is committed to understanding who its visitors/users and non-visitors/users are, so that we meet their needs and provide access to our collections and services. We do this through on-going programmes of consultation, evaluation and analysis, and listening to feedback so that we are constantly improving accessibility to our collections and the services we offer. Demographic information gives us a partial picture of our visitors, and we are exploring the motivations and characteristics of existing and potential visitors further through audience segmentation research and ongoing digital user research.

As part of our Forward Plan we aim to recalibrate and capture more consistent and comparable data which is standardised across the whole of Wellcome Collection. We will benchmark this data with peer providers, to track progress. This will enable us to learn more about potential barriers to access and engagement and identify key areas for improvement.

To succeed in our mission, we will need to grow and broaden our audience base and enable deeper engagement. Our Audience Development Strategy outlines our priorities for audience development until 2021, acknowledging where there are distinct goals for different platforms and where there are shared ambitions across the whole museum and library.

10. Access to communications

Wellcome Collection's brand and approach to marketing and communications draws on our unique characteristics. Our communications should:

- Challenge preconceptions.
- Be positive and inclusive.
- Be eclectic, playful, provocative (as appropriate).

Our writing style should be:

- Friendly and approachable.
- Never dry and too literal.
- Intelligent/intelligible to 14+.
- Witty, playful or provocative (as appropriate).

Through this we commit to promoting Wellcome Collection's activities and events using accessible means of communication:

- We will provide information about access provision on our website.
- We will provide publicity material in alternative formats for a range of needs and languages, as required and on request.
- We will provide a range of ways that people can communicate with us, including telephone, email, social media and a dedicated enquiries service.
- We will follow best practice in design for all our communications to work for as broad an audience as possible.

We will evaluate all our services and projects to ensure they meet the provision of this policy and we will consult with users and non-users on new developments.

11. Access to learning and engagement

Wellcome Collection will continue to provide opportunities for different audiences and levels of ability, enabling them to explore, engage with and learn from our collections. We will continue to tailor our programme to the needs of specific groups. Wellcome Collection is also committed to helping new and established communities of researchers, regardless of background, ability or motivation, to engage with our collections in depth in order to create new knowledge and understanding or the social and cultural contexts of health.

We will provide a range of programmes to complement our temporary and permanent displays for people from a range of backgrounds and abilities.

We will identify and develop partnerships with a range of peer organisations to ensure that our activities continue to cater for the widest possible audiences.

12. Research access

We are committed to maximising public research access to our core collections, alongside our reference collections, through our library services. We offer dedicated onsite study facilities for researchers and online access to selected collections via our large-scale digitisation programme and e-resource subscriptions. We strive to provide clear, up-to-date and relevant catalogue entries (collections information) to assist researchers and wherever possible, we apply permissive Creative Commons licences to the information we create and make it available online. We do not seek to apply fresh copyright to our digitisations of previously out-of-copyright works and encourage copyright owners also to share their content and intellectual property via Creative Commons licences.

Research access to our collections is provided free of charge and in accordance with our published terms and conditions of use. We require library visitors and some online researchers to register for security and operational purposes and, in order to comply with licensing agreements, copyright and information legislation such as the Data Protection Act.

Our collections access framework enables us to open our collections and collections information as widely as possible, whilst also ensuring that we behave lawfully, ethically and responsibly:

- **Open –** available at the library to registered researchers on request and, to the extent permitted by copyright, can be copied for non-commercial use and private study. Digitised surrogates and collections information can be viewed online without the need to register and may be downloaded for use according to the licence terms.

Some open material online is additionally classed as:

- **Open with Advisory –** can be viewed following a click-through advisory warning. Copying and download may be restricted for material which has the potential to cause offence, damage or distress.

All of our Core and Support Collections, and associated collections information, are open or open with advisory by default unless they are:

- **Restricted –** available at the library to registered researchers, subject to an approved application for access. Restricted material cannot be copied and personal information must be anonymised in any notes made. In limited circumstances, restricted material may be made available online to authenticated users. Access may be restricted by:
  o Legislation, most commonly statutory protections for personal data.
  o Common law principles, including medical confidentiality, and legal professional privilege.

- **By appointment** – available at the library to registered researchers, subject to a pre-arranged appointment. Material may be copied, subject to a sensitivity review and condition assessment. An appointment may be necessary:
  o Where additional measures are in place to mitigate the risk of physical damage or loss (e.g. access is provided in our conservation studio)
  o Where access must be closely supervised to ensure health and safety guidance is followed
  o For formats requiring bespoke arrangements for access (e.g. some obsolete audio-visual or digital material)
  o For large and/or heavy items that cannot be accessed in the library space
  o For material held off-site
  o For uncatalogued material

- **Temporarily unavailable** – unavailable to registered researchers on a temporary basis whilst a specific action is undertaken. Material may be made temporarily unavailable:

  o Whilst it is awaiting or undergoing conservation treatment
  o Whilst it is out on loan for exhibition
  o Whilst it is being digitised
  o Whilst it is undergoing an internal assessment (e.g. a sensitivity review)

- **Closed –** not available for research, except with the permission of a relevant research ethics committee, where it can be demonstrated that access would not infringe the rights of any individuals mentioned in the material.

Further details on how we manage research access to our collections can be found in our published access procedures. Restrictions on access are applied for defined periods; special provisions may be made for depositors and community members consulting their own records.

In addition to our Core and Support Collections, we also provide access to:

- **Licensed Resources –** these are subscription databases, electronic journals and e-books made available under a licence from the publisher. Licensed resources are available to all library visitors. Selected resources are also available online to registered researchers.

- **Collections requiring permission from the donor** – under legacy terms of deposit for certain collections, we are obliged to ask researchers to obtain permission from the donor before consulting the material. Once permission has been granted, the material is available to consult at the library to registered researchers and copies are permitted, providing the material is classed as open.

13. Loans from our collections

Loans from our collections increase access to items not readily accessible or not on display and help widen our audience beyond the physical site. Wellcome Collection regularly lends items for exhibitions both in the UK and worldwide and such loans form a key component of Wellcome Collection's strategy. Our **Loans Out Policy** can be found on our website at: http://wellcomelibrary.org/content/documents/policy-documents/exhibition-loan-conditions112015.pdf

Sir Henry Wellcome's Museum Collection is on long-term loan to the Science Museum. The Science Museum provides access to this collection through its own activities including exhibitions, displays, its website, loans out and research.

14. Digital access and digitisation

Our users have a variety of needs and use a range of technologies to access our collections. We will continue to design and develop our site to ensure it works on all devices and with assistive technologies. We aim to provide digital access to all our audiences through digitisation, accessible user interfaces, open APIs and liberal licensing policies.

We have, to date, digitised over 220,000 items (35 million images). This programme of work continues to add approximately 250,000 images each month. We will continue to provide free global access to our unique collections and key modern printed material at a rate of up to 4 million pages per year. We will work to make born digital content, published and unpublished, readily accessible.

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