

**Scottish Textile Heritage Online final report
Appendix H: Textile Collections Forum**

**Wolfson Medical School Building, University of Glasgow
Tuesday 31 May 2005**

Report produced by Rachel Hunter, Museum Consultant, June 2005

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Introduction

Purpose

The Textiles Collections Forum conference was held in order to build on last year's seminar, 'Collections Knowledge and Strategic Collecting', held in Dundee, and is part of the **Scottish Textile Heritage Online** project [www.scottishtextileheritage.org.uk] a Scottish Executive Strategic Change Fund project, administered by the Scottish Museums Council.

The forum was intended for collections managers, curators and archivists and focused on common issues relating to textile collections in their broadest sense - from costume to company archives and cotton spinning machines. The aim of the conference was to develop:

- best practice guidelines on factors to take into consideration when offered textile objects/archives/ collections
- a strategy for contemporary collecting
- the scope for a sustainable textile collections network, based around the SCOT-TEXT email discussion list

Speakers

Fiona Anderson, Senior Curator of Dress and Textiles and Jilly Burns, National Partnerships Manager, both from the National Museums of Scotland
'The NMS perspective'

Duncan Dornon, General Manager of the Museum of Scottish Country Life
'The Rural Museums Network: promoting collaborative working and mapping distributed collections'

Rachel Hosker, Assistant Archivist, Business Archives, University
'Glasgow University Archive Services: towards a strategy for appraising business archives'

Rachel Hunter, Museum Consultant,
'Sustainable collecting networks: the current debate on contemporary collecting'

Sustainable collecting networks: the current debate on contemporary collecting
Presented by Rachel Hunter, Museum Consultant

STHOL has put into practice the concept of a distributed national collection by identifying textile and textile related collections, creating collection descriptions, collating information online, sharing expertise. It has highlighted a number of issues that need to be addressed as identified at the Dundee seminar¹ and which will be followed up at this conference. As background to our discussions it might be useful to look at the wider conference:

National Museum Directors Conference – published a paper in November 2003, 'Too Much Stuff? Disposal from museums.' This paper illustrates a shift towards questioning accepted views on disposal.

National Museums of Scotland – 2004-09 corporate plan shows that NMS, in response to the Scottish Executive's 2003 Action Framework for Museums in Scotland, is extending its national role by contributing advice and expertise to the museum community. With this in mind it is crucial that future development of collections networks is strategically aligned to NMS.

Museums Association – 'Collections for the Future'², a consultation run by the MA last year, the report from which highlights many of the benefits which have already been demonstrated by the STOHL project.

Scottish Museum Council response to MA interim report –

Collaboration SMC suggests that change is less necessary than investment. Mechanisms for collaboration already exist but need to be supported. There should also be support for existing networks through, for instance, web-based information such as a database of collections knowledge, email forums, online directories of contacts.

Sharing expertise - SMC claims that expertise exists but that it is being 'repressed' as staff are diverted into other activities. SMC has come up with an interesting proposal for strategic collection-less curators who can research, collate, disseminate knowledge of distributed, specialist collections rather than manage them physically. This echoes need identified at the Dundee conference for an independent development worker.

Use of collections – The sector needs digitised resources and investment in research facilities. (SMC does point out that the benefits of digitisation and open storage, usually held up as the answer to improving access, have yet to be proven.)

Significance recognition scheme - STHOL acts as a useful case study illustrating some of the issues that will need to be taken on board by the significance scheme. The experience of this project should inform the consultation of this scheme.

Technology – as our ability to share information more easily has improved dramatically, thanks to ICT, we can clearly see the potential for applying shared collections management to a nationally distributed collection. SMC's appointment of an ICT Adviser and the production of an ICT strategy show recognition of the importance of ICT to

¹ Report of Textile Collections Forum, 31 May 2005, Appendix C

² Collections for the Future, June 2005, www.museumsassociation.org.uk

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museum development generally. More specifically it also illustrates that we are stepping closer towards the strategic development of mechanisms to support collecting networks. Could the great progress made by STHOL be taken further by being developed as a model for future collecting?

Conclusion

The scope to extend and maintain the outcomes of the STOHL project will be influenced by this wider context, with new opportunities emerging all the time. This conference can explore these opportunities and plan further action.

The Rural Museums Network: promoting collaborative working and mapping distributed collections

Presented by Duncan Dornon

The 1999 MGC report '**Farming, Countryside and Museums**' identified 5 imperatives for rural museums in the UK.

1. To make connections and develop networks between museums and other organisations concerned with the countryside.
2. To create a database of principal objects.
3. Recognise the strengths and specialisms of a community of rural museums.
4. Promote the sharing of skills and knowledge both by example and training.
5. Develop the potential of rural life museums for lifelong learning by providing access to advice on interpretation & contemporary issues.

This resulted in the formation in 1999 of the **Rural Life Museums Action Group**. This group was formed out of members of the Society for Folk Life Studies. The members were volunteers with many years of experience within the sector including the original author of the report. The background to this challenging report was one in which, UK wide, rural life museums faced falling audiences and an increasing air of irrelevance, fuelled by collections which faltered in the 1950s and were therefore ever more remote from a largely urban audience.

The Rural Life Museums Action Group set about promoting the recommendations of the report and, in particular to stimulate the development of a fully effective network of museums.

At the same time the Museum of English Rural Life, based at Reading, received funding for a scoping study on the Distributed National Collection and also for a temporary post to start work on developing the network. This resulted in two detailed studies of sections of the 'national collection' (tractors and combine harvesters) and the "Breaking New Ground Conference". The conference set up a steering group to fully develop the network as an organisation and to develop fully a project to develop the member museums.

The **Rural Museums Network** (with a membership of 66) provides email support and sources of specialist support. This can help with decision-making on acquisition. Members can be confident that such decisions are as well informed as possible. The network is also a lobby group: by representing the vast majority of rural museums across the whole of the UK the network it can speak with some authority. It has also demonstrated the willingness of members to work together with a shared desire to move forward.

The Rural Museum Network (RMN) is now embarking on an MLA supported initiative '**Building Relevance**':

Phase 1 – Audience research. This will consider existing audience information, where available, commission further research as required, compare data to identify patterns

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and in particular to highlight areas of good practice. Many rural museums have no systematic audience data and this weakens any case for development funding.

Phase 2 – Creative forum. Including other organisations such as NFU, Landowners Federation, Landworkers Union, rural businesses, private collectors and museums.

Phase 3 – Distributed National Collection. The RMN began by studying two distributed collections, tractors (100) and combines (32). Although small in number, these collections provide a model for future practice. The study identified categories of collection, items missing and significance of objects. The next study is on the theme of dairy which covers tens of thousands of objects.

www.ruralmuseumsnetwork.org.uk

The National Museums of Scotland's Perspective

Presented by Fiona Anderson and Jilly Burns

NMS – Collecting Textiles (Fiona Anderson)

The NMS textile collection is of international importance. It consists of 40,000 objects and is the second largest in the UK after the V&A. There are other collections within NMS which include textiles, such as military, working life, industrial and archaeological collections. As well as being sizeable the collections represents breadth and depth, ranging from Turkey Red items to 17th century bog body clothing.

Contemporary collecting is about aiming to represent the 21st century as well as filling gaps in the existing collection. Recent acquisitions have been of Scottish material including textile art

The NMS collecting policy is published every five years and is due to be reviewed in 2006. Under the National Heritage (Scotland Act) 1985 collecting decisions are based on the opinion of NMS trustees. In practice this is delegated down. Each department has its own collecting policy. The main collecting criteria for all are that objects should be of national importance, have potential for display education or research and should enhance existing collections. Curators can also consider the following subsidiary criteria: objects that are significant in relation to their discipline, fill gaps or illuminate interesting holding sin NMS and elsewhere (for example by illustrating regional diversity). The issues of money, expertise, storage, conservation, conflict with other museum's policies are also taken into account. Individual curators make decisions about accepting donations. For purchases decisions are made jointly between curators, keepers and the Director.

Fiona is also the Scottish representative for Dress & Textiles Specialists which is a UK-wide organisation which promotes collaborative networks, information and support. It is particularly interested in promoting links between dedicated textile specialists and in reaching staff in small organisations who take responsibility for textiles within broader collections.

Developing a National Role (Jilly Burns) NMS Corporate Plan Priorities 2005 – 2009

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- In consultation with the museums community in Scotland we will expand our role and provide advice and support to the sector, so that museum all over the country can look after their collections better and enable more people to use them.
- We will work with museums, learning and wider cultural communities to establish partnerships which enable more people to use collections belonging to NMS and to others. Partnerships will focus on loans, touring exhibitions, online resources and training.

The role of the new National Partnerships Manager is to facilitate such partnership.

Collaboration: potential benefits

- Developing NMS relationships
- Understanding sector needs better
- Sharing expertise
- Parallel to NMS research and development
- Developing access to NMS collections
- Developing networks

Collaboration: potential barriers

- Level of information required (documentation issues)
- Staff expertise and existing project commitments (need to plan ahead to engage individuals)
- Compatibility with NMS initiatives (avoid duplication of effort)

We have looked at the gap in appraisal for business records. It was felt that this gap enhanced and sometimes created many of the problems faced by archivists managing business collections specifically, whether the repository is in-house company archives or a collecting repository. For both types the need for documenting and justifying actions of disposal has greatly increased, and business archivists are likely to feel this with the increase in legislation on corporate governance. Part of the problem is the diverse nature of industries, which can create specific types of records through their activities for which archivists cannot be experts in many different fields.

An area that it was felt had not been investigated was the relationship between the scenario of the acquisition of records and appraisal. The scenario of acquisition has a profound effect on the nature of the appraisal that takes place and can lead to collections being taken in and catalogued without a systematic process of appraisal taking place. The decision-making aids and suggestions for documentation we will produce aim to provide the business archivist with the appraisal process for the situations identified whether the records need to be acquired within 24 hours or 3 months.

There are a number of keywords we have applied:

- Practical
- Realistic not Idealistic
- Influencing Factors – accountability, stakeholders, statutory and regulatory requirements
- Documentation

Influencing Factors we've looked at:

- Legislation and accountability
- Scenario of Disposal
- Provenance and Context, Organisational Structure
- Time and Resource restraints

³ This appraisal strategy has been published as L Richmond and R Hosker: Seek and Destroy – an archival appraisal theory and strategy in A Tough and M Moss (eds) Record keeping in a Hybrid Environment; Managing the creation use, preservation and disposal of unpublished information objects in context; Chandos, Oxford, 2006

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From the range of record types and industries it was clear to see how many past decisions have been taken on an individual basis rather than strategically and therefore there was no documentation history or precedents. The endless task of creating appraisal methodologies for each sector was not a practical solution to this problem and concentrated much more on the records whereas many of the businesses had similar functions at a high level.

The key thing is documentation! We are compiling a step by step list of questions that an archivist dealing with the appraisal and selection of business archives should ask about the records. The questions will be linked to a process that can be used very quickly to ascertain certain things about a collection and its provenance. There will be options so that if more time and resources are available then the documentation can be fuller.

So far we have identified the influencing factors, and some questions to draw out the main functions and activities. We had thought of weighting the questions as to which would have the most impact on appraisal and selection but there were exceptions where it was felt professional judgement would be a better appraisal tool than any form of weighting.

Below is an example of the type of questions and assessment we are asking:

Criteria	Level of Significance	Further detail/ comment:
Geographical Scope	World-wide and Scotland <input type="checkbox"/> UK wide and Scotland <input type="checkbox"/> Scotland <input type="checkbox"/> Scottish Region <input type="checkbox"/> Local Area <input type="checkbox"/>	Scotland, including material that has significant relevance to Scotland but may not have been created within the geographical scope. Geographical scope for the institution as it stands today is world-wide. The company are in the top 50 investment companies in the world (Taken from Annual report 2002)
No Other Repository	No other part of the collection elsewhere <input type="checkbox"/> Part of collection elsewhere <input type="checkbox"/> Related material elsewhere <input type="checkbox"/>	None for this collection
Sector Records In Scotland (or of significance to Scotland)	Best or unique example for sector <input type="checkbox"/> Good example <input type="checkbox"/> Standard example of sector <input type="checkbox"/>	See separate sheets for Edinburgh and Glasgow financial sector searches as e.g.'s. For full UK

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	Not illustrative of sector <input type="checkbox"/>				financial sector records listed on the NRA go to http://www.hmc.gov.uk/nra/searches/buscomq.asp and select financial sector.
Retention Limitations	Legislative <input type="checkbox"/> Regulatory <input type="checkbox"/> Company policy <input type="checkbox"/>				Determined by Financial Services Authority, Data Protection Act, Company Confidentiality, Space and Administration costs.
Corpus (complete set of records)	Record Type (List):	Complete <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate <input type="checkbox"/> Survival <input type="checkbox"/> Incomplete <input type="checkbox"/>	Function (List):	Complete <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate <input type="checkbox"/> Survival <input type="checkbox"/> Incomplete <input type="checkbox"/>	By comparison with X collections at GUAS this is a comprehensive set of records detailing the activities, administration and management of the company
Politically Important/ Stakeholders	Top level <input type="checkbox"/> Mid level stakeholder <input type="checkbox"/> Low level stakeholder <input type="checkbox"/>				Academics, Company, Investors
Top Sector Employer	World-wide <input type="checkbox"/> Europe <input type="checkbox"/> UK <input type="checkbox"/> Scotland <input type="checkbox"/>				Further investigation needed.
Top 25 National Employer	Top 25 employer UK <input type="checkbox"/> Top 25 Employer Scotland <input type="checkbox"/>				At 31 st December 2002 this company had 559 staff in total UK wide (from annual report 2002)
Top 5 Regional Employer	Geographical <input type="checkbox"/> Sector <input type="checkbox"/>				See above
First Offer to an archival repository/institution	First Offer <input type="checkbox"/> Second offer (give reason) <input type="checkbox"/> Offered to more than two repositories (give reason) <input type="checkbox"/>				Offer because of Scottish Business Archive at GUAS. Company's choice.
Social/ethnic Minority Business	Business owned by social/ ethical minority business <input type="checkbox"/> Business employees from social/ ethnic minorities (?) <input type="checkbox"/>				Not reflective of this within Scotland and business they did. Records may

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	Business reflective (products and customers) of a social/ ethical background (?) <input type="checkbox"/>	show something of this through investors and multinational companies connected. Unlikely.
Corporate Responsibility Initiative	Department exists <input type="checkbox"/> Dealt with by existing department <input type="checkbox"/> Adheres to principles. Not part of corporate structure <input type="checkbox"/>	Ethical Investment. Separate Department. High profile on web page and in marketing. Socially responsible investment.
National or Local Identification	Significance at National level UK <input type="checkbox"/> Significance at National Level Scotland <input type="checkbox"/> Significance at Regional level <input type="checkbox"/> Significance at Local Level <input type="checkbox"/>	International, National both Scotland and UK and Local in Edinburgh
Illustrative Example for Sector	Records Created <input type="checkbox"/> Business Functions <input type="checkbox"/> Products or Services <input type="checkbox"/>	Records created are illustrative of the sector but mostly on the financial side of the business. Business functions are highlighted through minute books and financial operations.
Technological Innovation	Products <input type="checkbox"/> Research <input type="checkbox"/> Processes <input type="checkbox"/>	Further investigation is needed.
Organisational Innovation	Management..... <input type="checkbox"/> Customer Care/ Client Care <input type="checkbox"/> Staff Development <input type="checkbox"/>	Further investigation is needed. One thing might be that they are currently open and ethical – was this a trend in the past?
Cultural Significance	Geographical <input type="checkbox"/> Industry Sector <input type="checkbox"/> Cultural sector/ discipline <input type="checkbox"/>	First investment and private banking company in Scotland. Important as a benchmark.
Product/ Market	Unusual or unique product <input type="checkbox"/> Particular market leaders <input type="checkbox"/> Illustrative of dealing with markets in sector <input type="checkbox"/>	Further investigation needed.

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Industry Leader	Financial (investment in/ funds available) <input type="checkbox"/> Products/ services <input type="checkbox"/> Processes/ operations <input type="checkbox"/>	The company is a top ten investment company quoted on the London stock Exchange. As of 31 December 2002 funds under management totalled £60.1bn.
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Conclusions of break-out groups

The conference broke out at the end of the morning session into three groups to discuss:

1. The development of a sustainable textile collections network
2. A strategy for contemporary collecting

1. The development of a sustainable textile collections network:

Scope and merits of an email forum

All groups agreed that this was an appropriate route for communication which could encourage collaboration, sharing collection policies and expertise, overcoming isolation and working across domains. At present the MLA is funding the development of Subject Specialist Networks on a UK national level. A textiles group has been established, led by the V&A. This could provide a structure to engage with (instead of duplicating effort). Concern was raised that an email forum may result in an overburden of emails to be read: the forum should also be supported by a website with targeted discussion. Hosting the website and sense of ownership were also raised as issues that would need to be addressed.

Composition of forum

The forum should have a broad inclusive base, including those outside the museum and archive fields, such as textile industry experts.

What would the forum achieve?

It could provide curatorial support, expert consensus of opinion and would be of benefit to all sizes of collections and organisations. A website would build on the work of STHOL by providing an online catalogue, mapping collections, directory of expertise and a digital image library.

How would it work?

The groups agreed that the next step should be the formation of a working party, informal in structure and cross-domain to drive forward the development of a network. There should perhaps be an associated part-time post to develop the network. Such a group would have to be clear about the purpose of, and audience for, the network and should take lessons from the experience of existing and emerging subject specialist networks. Consideration should be given to the way such a network would relate to the Significance Recognition Scheme. It was acknowledged that the working party may be short lived if it arrives at the conclusions that existing networks can provide the benefits identified earlier in the discussion.

2. Strategy for contemporary collecting

It is known that there are gaps in textile collections – in particular modern clothing as modern textile production and associated objects and archives are based abroad. Groups referred to the model illustrated by the Rural Museums Network which chose to map what is already in museums, starting with discrete, small collection types.

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This would help to identify gaps in individual institutions and overall within the sector. The groups discussed the options for collecting: either taking a safety net approach or a more structured protocol. It was felt that a structured protocol would be too difficult to achieve and implement at this stage. The safety net approach, with associated guidelines, was the preferred option. The network could be used to share information and inform decision making.

Contemporary collecting decisions need to be influenced by collections managers, audience/user groups, subject specialists outwith the museum and archive sectors, (national) Scottish and (national) UK representatives. What is to be collected may be more important than taking a local, regional or a national approach to collecting. Identified gaps can then provide a benchmark for individual collections to check their collecting policies against.

Best practice guidelines on factors to consider when offered textile objects/archives/collections

This was intended to have been the subject for discussion during afternoon breakout sessions at the conference. However, all agreed that in the light of the morning's discussions it would be more pertinent to concentrate on the next steps for developing a network. In place of Rachel Hunter's presentation of a case study examining the principles and practice of rationalisation at Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service⁴ the three breakout groups reformed to discuss:

1. Proposed remit for a steering group
2. What constituencies should be represented on the steering group
3. Other models, initiatives and sources of expertise which could inform the development of a network

1. Proposed remit for a steering group

- Look at the sustainability of the outcomes of STHOL
- Devise a strategy for contemporary collecting
- Generate good practice and rationalisation guidelines
- Create a database of expertise and resources
- Examine existing/emerging networks and identify ways of collaborating with these (possibly as an alternative to setting up a new network)
- Consider membership categories and criteria

2. What constituencies should be represented on the steering group?

The following were identified as appropriate groups or agencies to invite to an initial meeting to set up a steering group. It was agreed that it would not be feasible to represent all in a steering party but the combined knowledge of such people will be essential at a set-up meeting to ensure that any decisions to set up, or not, a specialist network, will be based on up to the minute knowledge of current developments. All parties not participating directly in the steering group would be kept informed of developments.

- SMC and NMS
- Museums Libraries and Archives Council
- Curators including technology curators
- Textile industry experts
- Users (e.g. students, textile guilds)

⁴ A summary of the rationalisation strategy for Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service was provided in the conference pack and is attached to this report at Appendix B.

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- Individuals with experience of network development (e.g. Rural Museums Network, Coal Collections Network, V&A Subject Specialist Network, Group for Costume & Textile Staff in Museums)
- Royal Commission of Ancient and Historic Monuments of Scotland
- Scottish Arts Council/Crafts Council
- Learning Teaching Scotland
- National organisations: libraries, archives, museums
- SMC member representation from LA, independent and university museum sector
- Private collectors
- Local history groups
- National Trust for Scotland
- Historic Scotland
- NADFAS

3. Other models, initiatives and sources of expertise which could inform the development of the network

- Scottish Local Authority Museums
- Archivists of Scottish Local Authorities Working Group
- Association of Independent Museums
- Scottish Council on Archives
- Scottish Library and Information Council
- Scran
- Central Archives Hub (Manchester)
- Rural Museums Network
- Business Archives Council Scotland
- Scottish Industrial Archaeology Panel
- Social History Curators Group
- Scottish Records Association – which consists of users, owners and practitioners
- Maritime Curators Group
- Rural Museums Network
- Coal Collections Group (Scotland)
- RDCF: South West Scotland, Digital Resources Team Project (East Scotland), Scotland and Medical Collections
- SCF Burns Project
- ARCON/ MAC A2A

How to ensure cross-domain involvement

- Make up the steering group in equal numbers from each domain
- Have rolling representation on the steering group
- Write this aim into the vision or mission statement of the group.

Next step:

An invitation will be extended to all those identified at the conference to attend a preliminary meeting to explore the necessity, remit and final representation of a steering group.

Action: Gill Findlay, SMC and Ann Jones, Heriot Watt University, to organise preliminary meeting.

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Textile Collections Forum Appendix A
Organisations represented
National Museums of Scotland
Fife Folk Museum
National Museums of Scotland
Dundee Heritage Trust, Verdant Works
Paisley Museum and Art Galleries
Dundee City Archives
Museum of Scottish Country Life
West Dunbartonshire Council Archive
Scottish Museums Council
National Library of Scotland
National Museums of Scotland
MacDougall Collection
Scottish Fisheries Museum
Jordanhill Library and Archives, University of Strathclyde
Lothian Health Services Archive
Glasgow University Archive Services
Museum Consultant – facilitator
Scottish Museums Council
University of Dundee Archive, Records Management and Museum Services
Heriot-Watt University Archive, Records Management and Museum Service
Scottish Museums Council
Perth Museum and Art Gallery
Glasgow City Council Museums
National Register of Archives for Scotland
Glasgow University Archive Services
HATII, Glasgow University
Scottish Borders Council Museums & Galleries Service
Aberdeen Art Gallery and Museums
North Lanarkshire Council, Museums Service
National Trust for Scotland
Dumfries and Galloway Health Board Archive
Stranraer Museum, Dumfries and Galloway Council

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<p>Report of Textile Collections Forum, Tuesday 31 May 2005 Appendix B Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service Strategy for rationalising collections</p>

Categories of collection:

Core collection

- Display material – best or most significant items in the collections
- Study collections – open storage and study rooms for people who want to learn more about a specific subject
- Long-term research material – available on appointment basis; evidence for current or future research

Items not retained for the core collection

- Working or demonstration material (likely to be restored items)
- Education, handling and loan collection (implied deterioration through usage over time)
- Set dressing and 'cannibalisation'
- Dispersal – using MA and Registration guidelines. Sold or given away. Remain in public domain.
- Disposal – using MA guidelines, objects are scrapped.

Access categories

These are given a code to indicate the degree of protection that is recommended by a conservator or curator for the type of material:

- 0 - unsuitable for public access (no access)
- 1 - extremely important or valuable material (high security)
- 2 - high importance, valuable or fragile (normal display case)
- 3 - large and robust (open display)
- 4 - medium-high importance (indirect handling permitted)
- 5 - robust or expendable (supervised handling permitted)
- 6 - expendable (unsupervised handling)

Rationalisation

NMAS is conducting a rationalisation programme which will concentrate on identifying which material should fall into category 3 and below. Material in category 2 will be reviewed to identify if there is anything surplus to requirements. This programme will be conducted by a rationalisation team. (At NMAS this includes Collections Management Officer, Chief Curator, Head of Conservation, site curators and subject specialists.)

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Appendix C
Summary of Dundee workshop, June 2004**

- 1. Is there scope for agreement of complementary collecting policies and rationalisation of textile collections:**
 - a. at a local level
 - b. regional level
 - c. national level?
- 2. How would this work in practice?**
- 3. What are the advantages?**
- 4. What are the disadvantages?**

The main **issues** identified at the conference are summarised below:

- To be able to recognise a distributed national collection it is necessary to be able take an overview. This is inhibited by inadequate documentation, lack of resources and patchy knowledge base.
- When offered new acquisitions it would be helpful to know who to contact for advice, i.e. to know how this acquisition fits into the bigger picture.
- There needs to be a mechanism for sharing collecting policies.
- Changing procedures for acquisition and disposal, to meet guidelines based on the concept of a national distribute collection, would need to be supported at senior management level.
- The sector needs to reach an agreement on contemporary collecting. There also needs to be more active collecting.
- Collections information and context is central to acquisition decisions. What collections will be used for should also inform acquisition decisions.
- Could there be a national strategy for rationalisation?
- The role of the NMS, NLS and NAS should be articulated.
- The importance of geography and a sense of local ownership must not be underestimated.
- The relationships between local authorities and independent museums should be taken into account.

The conference suggested the following **mechanisms** to enable the delivery of complementary collecting policies:

- Production of a joint national contemporary collecting policy which individual museums can participate in i.e. identify areas which need to be collected
- Guidelines should be fluid to reflect change, i.e. regular review
- There should be a neutral forum for decision making
- Individual institutions could pool storage to avoid policy of default
- Principle of access should take precedence over location
- There should be an independent development worker for the sector e.g. to broker proactive collecting and to educate potential donors
- Set up a communication network and mechanism for skills exchange/research interests (e.g. on website)
- Decision making for collecting and disposing needs access to expertise