



**Promoting Designated collections**  
**A guide for museums, libraries and archives with**  
**Designated collections**

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## Introduction

This guide is to help museums, libraries and archives promote their Designated collections. It can supplement the resources already provided by communications colleagues or, if you are responsible for promoting the collections yourself, provide some easy to follow tips and templates. The purpose of this guide is to help you:

- Encourage people from all sectors of the community to use, enjoy and benefit from the Designated collections.
- To raise the profile of Designated collections within governing bodies and the funding community, to support the case for long-term support for the collections.
- Help you achieve media coverage about your collection and the difference the Designation Scheme has made.
- Encourage your press office and local authority to make use of the material we have provided – please cut and paste content for your specific needs.

### **Think creatively**

Consider all the different ways you can spread the word about your institution and its Designated collection(s). Explore reciprocal links with local organisations to exchange each other's promotional information (including information in each other's newsletters and websites). You could contact:

- Other cultural institutions (theatres, cinemas, heritage and concert venues).
- Other visitor attractions.
- Hotels and other holiday accommodation.
- Health clubs and leisure centres.
- Tourist information centres.
- Restaurants, cafes and retail outlets.
- Community/volunteer organisations.
- Schools, colleges and universities.
- Public libraries.

Remember to keep your local authority up to date with information on your Designated collection.

### **Internal communications**

Let people in your own organisation know about your success – your colleagues are among your most important ambassadors. Circulate articles and news about the collection as widely as possible.

## Who's who and what's what

The paragraphs below have all been approved for media use in your promotional materials.

### **Designation Scheme**

The Designation Scheme aims to identify and celebrate the pre-eminent collections of national and international importance held in England's non-national museums, libraries and archives. The Scheme was launched in 1997 for museums only and extended to libraries and archives in 2005. The Scheme, which is managed by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA), now includes more than 100 collections.

### **Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA)**

The Museums, Libraries and Archives Council is the government's agency for museums, galleries, libraries and archives. It delivers strategic leadership in England and in each of its regions and collaborates with partners across the UK. Its research identifies good practice, which is used to promote improvement. We offer advice, support and resources to funding bodies and other groups to provide incentives for innovation. Its aim is to raise professional standards and champion better services for users and readers of all ages and backgrounds, whether residents or visitors. See [www.mla.gov.uk](http://www.mla.gov.uk)

## Media relations

It is important to work closely with other colleagues in your organisation (or governing body) when promoting your Designated collection. This is because they may already be following a communications strategy or plan.

### **Key messages**

The main messages to communicate are:

#### **1. To the public**

- One of the most important collections in England is right on your doorstep. The [xxx] collection in [xxx museum/library/archive] is Designated as being of outstanding national importance. Come and visit!

#### **2. Governing bodies, funders, museum/library/archive community**

- The outstanding collections held in Designated museums, libraries and archives are valuable learning tools for people of all ages – they contribute to personal identity and social cohesion.
- Designated collections also have an impact on the economy – for example by encouraging tourism.
- Designated collections play an essential role in caring for England's cultural heritage.
- MLA is committed to the continued recognition and promotion of these remarkable collections, so they can be fully enjoyed by many generations to come.

## Press releases

Every time a collection is awarded Designated status the MLA will issue a press release. This release can then be adapted for your own local news media. An example of a recent MLA press release is on pages 7-8 and you can use this as a template for other releases. Ideas for sending a release to your local press include:

- The opening/launch of a new gallery.
- The announcement of new funding.
- Announcing a celebrity or special visitor to the collection.
- A Designated collection's involvement in a national programme like the MLA's Renaissance programme.
- An interesting story about someone using the collections.
- How local people benefit from the collections. These 'real life' case studies make excellent stories in the local press.

### **Who should you send the release to?**

You can either address the press release to the 'news editor', or get the person's name from the newspaper's switchboard – ask for the newsdesk.

When emailing the release, send the press release in body of the email rather than as an attachment.

### **When to send the press release**

Time the release according to the paper's deadlines – call to ask.

Issuing regular press releases will encourage your local journalists to take an interest in your collection but remember press coverage is not guaranteed – it depends on what else is happening, how much editorial space is available, and the strength of the stories you are competing with.

### **Press release checklist**

- Does the release include the five 'Ws'? (the What, Why, When, Where, Who) in the first paragraph?
- Is the lead paragraph direct and to the point?
- Is your headline punchy and eye catching?
- Has the local angle been emphasised?
- Is the release brief, factual and interesting?
- Is spelling and punctuation correct?
- Is the release dated?

### **Press release template**

The following press release is an example of a recent press release issued for three collections that have been Designated. MLA will issue press releases for your Designation but you may want to tailor this example for your local media purposes. Please check with the MLA before issuing a release so that the details are correct (MLA contacts are on page 14).

**[Press release template]**

**Date:** Monday 25 February 2008

**Contact:** John Harrison Tel 020 7273 1402 [john.harrison@mla.gov.uk](mailto:john.harrison@mla.gov.uk)

**Design, D H Lawrence and Oriental history collections recognised as outstanding**

Three of the country's most exceptional collections, covering literature, design and Oriental history, have been awarded Designated status by the MLA to acknowledge their significance and quality.

The D H Lawrence collection at the University of Nottingham's King's Meadow Campus, the Museum of Domestic Design & Architecture's Silver Studio collection and the Egyptology and Chinese collections held by Durham University Oriental Museum are the latest to receive the award.

Roy Clare, MLA Chief Executive, said: "These collections are among the best in the country and the Designated status marks this quality. Designation not only raises the profile of outstanding collections such as these, but allows the sector to improve standards by providing high quality services for visitors, sharing advice and expertise among institutions and lending objects to enhance access."

The cultural impact of D H Lawrence is evident throughout the University of Nottingham's comprehensive collection, which includes many materials relating to his native Nottinghamshire.

The Silver Studio was a commercial design studio active between 1880 and 1963. The vast collection includes a fascinating record of design in the English home during this time.

At Durham University Oriental Museum the Egyptology collection is one of the best in Britain. It was built around a core collection made by the Fourth Duke of Northumberland in the mid-nineteenth century and comprises over 6,700 objects. The museum's Chinese collection is one of the most comprehensive in Europe, housing over 10,000 artefacts to provide a rich and diverse overview of the history of Chinese material culture.

The Designation Scheme, run by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, recognises museum, library and archive collections that are of outstanding national and international importance. These three collections are among only 100 or so across the whole country that have been awarded this prestigious status.

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### **Notes to Editors**

The D H Lawrence collection, held in the University of Nottingham's Manuscripts and Special Collections on the King's Meadow Campus, comprehensively covers the work of D H Lawrence and responses to it. It is particularly strong in original material relating to his native Nottinghamshire. The collection clearly demonstrates the significant cultural impact of Lawrence on the latter half of 20<sup>th</sup> century, including on the publishing industry. It demonstrates his status as a figure of both national and international importance.

The Silver Studio collection, at Middlesex University, is comprised of over 40,000 designs on paper, samples, pattern books and an archive of the Studio's letters, diaries, visual reference material, trade cards and other printed ephemera. The business archive is of particular importance, providing material for those researching cultural and related social changes. Its comprehensiveness makes the collection relevant both nationally and internationally for research ranging from business and labour history, to consumption of domestic furnishings, and marketing, as well as the more obvious disciplines of history of design, decoration and studio practice.

The Egyptian collection is one of the best Egyptology resources in Britain. It ranges from the Pre-Dynastic to the Coptic periods in date and includes a wide selection of objects ranging from monumental sculpture to woven sandals. Numerous items of exceptional quality and international significance are included. Key examples are a unique 18th Dynasty boxwood carving of a Nubian servant girl; the 18th Dynasty polychrome sycamore boxes of Perpawty; and a fine 13th Dynasty granite statue of the vizier Paser.

The Chinese collections forms one of the most comprehensive in Europe. It includes numerous fine examples from later dynasties along with a significant and representative collection of pieces from earlier dynasties. In 2007 the museum purchased a portfolio of 60 contemporary Chinese prints, representing the work of many of China's best contemporary printmakers.

The Designation Scheme identifies the pre-eminent collections of national and international importance held in England's non-national museums, libraries and archives, based on their quality and significance. These inspiring collections represent a vital part of our national cultural and artistic heritage. The Scheme now covers over 100 collections held in museums, libraries and archives.

## Other ways to generate interest from the local press

- Develop regular contacts with local journalists.
- Write letters to the editor.
- Invite local journalists to events.
- Arrange an opportunity for the newspaper to take an interesting photograph and tell the paper about it in advance.
- Pitch ideas for articles you could write for the paper or magazine.

### **Ideas for news stories or articles**

- People getting involved with the museum through the local community centre – be sure to highlight the benefits to the people involved.
- If an important new item is donated to the collection, possibly by a local person.
- If an older person visits collection and recalls using an object from their youth, if they have a photograph of it for example.
- If a new member of staff joins the institution – bringing unique skills and local knowledge.
- When local school children help the museum/library/archive with a special project.

### **News stories checklist**

- Be creative – quirky stories are always of interest.
- Be local – this is about promoting your collection.
- Be timely – news should be as recent as possible.

## Responding to media calls

You may be contacted by local reporters for information to support stories they are researching or as a result of your press release.

- Don't feel pressured into providing an answer on the spot.
- Always get details of the enquiry, contact name, publication, telephone and fax numbers or email address, and details of any deadlines.
- If it's a tricky issue, don't be led into conversation. There's no such thing as 'off the record'. Try asking for the questions in writing so you can think through and prepare your answers.
- If you say you'll call back by a certain time, it is important to do so.
- Be enthusiastic about your collection – this will encourage the reporter to ring you another time.

**Please refer any media enquiries about the Designation Scheme in general to the MLA's communications team.**

## Events

Local events provide an important opportunity for photo opportunities and for raising awareness of Designation in your local area. An event can be any activity which celebrates or launches a service or product – it should draw attention by inviting participation. For example:

- The launch of a new gallery/initiative.
- Hosting a 'discovery day' to find out about all the collection has to offer.
- Inviting school children to create a new exhibition and poster.
- Hold a 'children bringing their parents and grandparents day'.
- Celebrating the acquisition of an important new item.
- A fund-raising event.
- Holding a 'sponsor an item' day.

### **When thinking about an event, ask yourself**

- Is it unusual?
- Will it make a good photograph?
- Will people come along?
- Is it easy to promote?
- Could you interest a celebrity or special visitor?

### **Ideas for celebrities or special visitors**

- TV programmes that are made in your area.
- Local radio DJs, broadcast journalists or regional TV weather presenters.
- Local artists, sculptors, poets or journalists.
- The mayor/mayoress.
- The local MP or local authority chief executive.

### **The photocall – inviting the press to an event**

You can issue a 'photocall' or 'press call' in advance of an event, and the press release should follow. The press release tells the media about what happened at the event and should be issued either on the day of the event itself by post, fax or email, or shortly after it. Give journalists between three and five working days as notice of the event. Photocalls are for newspapers, specifically notifying of a photo opportunity. Press calls are for radio or television, specifically outlining an interview or filming opportunity. When drafting a photocall notice include the following:

- Address the photocall notice to the 'picture desks' at your local newspaper.
- Put 'photocall' at the top and include a snappy title which explains the event.
- Give details of date, time and place, plus a short description of the photographic opportunity.
- Always give details for further information including name and contact telephone number.

Telephone the picture desk before the event to check if they are sending a photographer and that they have all the information they require. You may want to book your own photographer, to make sure you get the images you need.

When the press arrive, make sure that you have enough people and props for the photograph and get the museum name, and if possible the Designation logo, in the photograph. Write down the names of the people in the photograph, with titles if appropriate, making sure you include a reference to the Designation Scheme.

If you think the event is newsworthy enough to issue to local radio and TV, change the heading to 'Press call notice'. A template is provided below.

### **Template photocall notice**

#### **PHOTOCALL NOTICE**

#### **World renowned artist Anthony Gormley Celebrates the Designation Scheme at xx Museum**

DATE: [insert day, date and year]

TIME: [insert time]

PLACE: [insert place including full postal address and give directions if it is not an easy place to find]

CONTACT: XXX

DETAILS: Anthony Gormley, the creator of the Angel of the North, is at xx museum on xxxxx meeting staff and users and celebrating the Designation Scheme and xx museum's Designated Collection.

Further details about the museum,

-ends-

**For further information please contact xxx at xxx museum on [tel number].**

#### **What to do if the media are unable to attend the event?**

Offer a photograph of the event with an amended release which could include such details as how much money was raised or how many people turned up.

#### **Booking your own photographer**

One way you can make sure you get the right pictures of your event is to organise your own photographer.

You need to make sure you use a good photographer who will:

- Be sensitive to the fact that you may have visitors who may not want their photograph taken.
- Create shots that are in the right style for the press to use.
- Know how to get the best shots and work with people to create happy and positive shots.
- Ensure consent forms are signed by members of the public included in the photo (a template consent form is on 12).
- Provide the images in the right format, as soon as possible after the event.

Find photographers via the web or by contacting the local paper. Allow around £70+ an hour for a photographer, excluding expenses and VAT. If you decide to book your own photographer, you will need to write a clear brief for the photographer (see the following template).

### **Template photography brief**

**Photographer:** Name  
Address

**Location:**

**Time:** xx:xxam/pm

**Meeting:** Please ask for [contact name] on arrival.

#### **Details**

We have arranged for Anthony Gormley to come and celebrate our Designated Collection(s) on Thursday 5 July and have arranged a photocall to take place at 11:00 am.

We would like colour photography taken for press purposes depicting the story and would ask that you attend before 10.45am to discuss any last minute lighting/position arrangements. We anticipate the photocall lasting x hours. Our budget is £xx.

We need photographs to be taken with the minimum of disruption to the museum as we will be open to the public. Photographs need to capture the excitement of the celebration and the service it will provide, so we will need to ask a visitor to appear in the photograph.

**Please ensure the supplied consent form is completed by any members of the public who are photographed. This is particularly important if children are involved.**

[Insert your contact details]

## Consent form template

### **Image (photographic) consent form**

From time to time the XXX [insert institution] takes photographs for use to promote its collections. For children below 12 years of age to appear in these photos, full parental/guardian consent is required. For young people between the ages of 12-16 parental/guardian consent is recommended but not essential. The young person may, having read the form, sign for themselves. All persons over 16 can sign for themselves.

The XXX [insert institution] never publishes personal details without additional permission being given.

This consent form covers any use of the images (and supporting textual information) by the XXX [insert institution] for a five year period starting from the date you sign this form. At the end of that period all images will cease to be used and be destroyed.

### **You may wish to keep a copy of this form**

#### **Legal clauses – these apply to the whole of the form**

Signing this form gives agreement for the individual named to take part in a photographic/video shoot for the XXX [insert institution] thereby giving consent to the full use of the material by that organization. Additionally if you have given permission, personal details may be used in conjunction with your image.

I agree to notify the XXX [insert institution] before speaking to the press/broadcast media concerning this photographic/video shoot. The copyright of any material which is generated as a result of this shall be assigned to the XXX [insert institution]. This agreement is covered by the law of England and Wales.

Signed:

Name:

Address:

**See over for parent/guardian consent for children.**

**Image consent (tick as appropriate)**

- I am the parent/guardian of this child aged 0–12
- I am the young person (aged 12-16)
- I am the parent/guardian of the young person (aged 12–16) (additional recommended approval)
- I am the individual and am 16+ years

**Personal details consent (tick as appropriate)**

- As the parent/guardian I give my permission for the child's (aged 0–12) or young person's (aged 12–16) name/pseudonym (delete as necessary) to be used with their image in conjunction with text.
- I am the young person (aged 12–16) and I give permission for my name/pseudonym (delete as necessary) to be used with my image in conjunction with text. NB even if the parent/guardian has given permission the young person aged 12–16 must also agree.
- I am the individual and I give permission for my name/pseudonym to be used with my image in conjunction with text.

<p><b>Personal details</b> Name of child/young person/individual:</p> <p>Name of parent/guardian (where applicable)*:</p> <p>Address (parent/guardian or individual):</p> <p>Postcode:</p> <p>Signed (parent/guardian/individual)*:</p> <p>Signed (young person aged 12-16):</p> <p>*Always for a child 0-12 years. Recommended but not essential for young people aged 12-16. Not required for individuals 16+</p>
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<p><b>Personal details</b> Name of child/young person/individual:</p> <p><b>School/organisation details</b> Name of school/organisation:</p> <p>Address of school/organisation (where applicable):</p> <p>Postcode:</p> <p>Date:</p>
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## Make the most of images (MLA Media Zone)

Use images as often as you can, in promotional literature, on websites or to support news stories. The MLA may already have images from your collection in its image library (called MLA Media Zone), email [sarah.waldron@mla.gov.uk](mailto:sarah.waldron@mla.gov.uk) for more details.

### Radio and television interviews

Your local radio and TV stations may be willing publicise your event, so give them a call.

#### Types of interview

- Studio – you and the presenter face to face in the station.
- Telephone – on a phone, to the presenter in the radio station (a ‘down-the-line’ interview and may be pre-recorded or live).
- Outside – you and the presenter at a relevant location.
- Panel discussion – most likely to happen in the studio

#### Checklist

- Know what you want to get from the interview and what you want to say.
- Prepare two or three key points (remember the key messages on page 4) and rehearse them before the interview.
- Check out the details in advance, for example:
  - what type of interview will it be?
  - how long will it last?
  - is it live or pre-recorded?
  - is anyone else being interviewed?
  - ask the presenter what questions they will be asking.
- Prepare yourself by wearing comfortable clothes (avoiding jangling jewellery like bangles and stripy clothing if it is a TV interview)
- Speak more slowly than normal, use everyday language and try not to repeat expressions such as ‘kind of’ and ‘you know what I mean’ etc.
- Maintain eye contact with the interviewer, don’t be distracted by movement among the film crew or bystanders.
- Consider what you don’t want to say – rehearse being asked difficult questions and think through appropriate answers.
- Avoid jargon!

## Promoting your collection on your website

You can promote your Designated collection very effectively using your organisation's website. As writing for the web is different to producing text for print (as people tend to scan from websites, not read word for word) the following tips may be useful:

- Use the reverse pyramid style or 'front-loading' technique of writing – put the most important information first. For example, make sure you mention in the opening paragraph that your collection is designated of national or international significance.
- Write in short, concise sentences (of 16-20 words), using plain English.
- Keep your text succinct enough so that readers don't have to scroll down.
- Use each paragraph to convey a single point.
- Use bullet points but not too many – the 'seven, plus or minus two' rule is a good guide (studies show that the optimum number of points that people absorb are five, seven or nine).

### Designation logos

Whether you are promoting your collections on the web or in print use the Designation logo. This is available (with guidelines) from [designation@mla.gov.uk](mailto:designation@mla.gov.uk) or [sarah.waldron@mla.gov.uk](mailto:sarah.waldron@mla.gov.uk)

### MLA contacts

John Harrison, Head of Communications

E: [john.harrison@mla.gov.uk](mailto:john.harrison@mla.gov.uk)

T: 020 7273 1402

Paula Brikci, Designation Manager

E: [paula.brikci@mla.gov.uk](mailto:paula.brikci@mla.gov.uk)

T: 0121 345 7342