



Promoting Designated Collections



Promoting Designated Collections

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Promoting Designated Collections

1 Introduction

MLA's 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 recognises that organisations with Designated collections care for a significant part of England's cultural heritage and sets out to raise standards across the sector. Organisations holding Designated collections are expected to work towards the provision of high-quality services which deliver the fullest possible access to those collections and to take a leadership role in the sector by helping other institutions in such ways as sharing expertise, offering advice and lending objects or materials.

Designation is a mark of distinction. It is an accolade celebrating unique collections of national and international importance, and an endorsement that your collection represents the high quality of the very best museums, libraries and archives.

This guide has been created by MLA to help museums, libraries and archives promote their Designated collections. It can supplement resources provided by communications colleagues, and provides easy to follow tips and templates to help:

- develop your core messaging around Designation
- encourage your press office and local authority to make use of the material we have provided
- achieve media coverage about your collection and the difference Designation has made
- provide support in promoting your collection through events, photography, branding and website content.

All of this will enable you to:

- encourage people from all sectors of the community to use, enjoy and benefit from Designated collections
- raise the profile of Designated collections within governing bodies and the funding community, to support the case for long-term collections support.

MLA staff are also happy to advise and assist with any events planned to promote your Designated collection (see section 4 for contact details).



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2 What to say

2.1 Definitions

The paragraphs below have been approved for use in your promotional materials and provide concise introductions to Designation and MLA. The Designation Value Statement (see 2.2) has also been included to provide more detailed information on the Scheme.

Designation

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), includes more than 100 collections.

Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA)

Leading strategically, the MLA promotes best practice in museums, libraries and archives, to inspire innovative, integrated and sustainable services for all.

The Museums, Libraries and Archives Council is a Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB), sponsored by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). Find out more about MLA at <http://www.mla.gov.uk>



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2.2 Designation Value Statement

Following consultation with the sector, MLA has developed the Value Statement below to support the Designation Scheme and provide strategic vision for future initiatives associated with the Scheme. This Statement sits within the overall MLA approach to sector improvement for museums, libraries and archives, builds on Leading Museums and utilises the Renaissance outcomes framework.

Designation is a mark of distinction. It is an accolade, celebrating unique collections of national and international importance. Designated collections are:

- iconic authentic and of the finest quality
- resourced with sophisticated expert management
- set in aspirational and creative organisations

Designated collections are a vital component of England's cultural identity; they inform individuals and communities about our forebears and contribute to a sense of community and place; they build local, regional and national wealth through support for learning, skills development and tourism.

The benefit of Designated collections to society is to offer:

- an outstanding audience experience
- enjoyment, inspiration and knowledge, and formal and informal learning for audiences of all ages

Designated collection holders endorse the values held by the best museums, libraries and archives:

Continuous Improvement - they use their collections as an integral part of an improvement focused organisation and champion continuous development

Excellence - their collections hold a quality and range of items which tell a unique story

Innovation - their organisations are adaptable to new working methods and they provide a dynamic interaction between teaching and research

Sustainability - via responsible stewardship and a business-minded approach.

Sharing - They broaden and deepen access to their resources for a diverse audience. They drive increased quality in documentation and digital access to collections.

This is encouraged by:

Investment in Professional Development - Continuous professional development is championed to ensure Designated collection holders undertake in-depth relevant research, provide excellent care of collections, and aspire to a leadership role within the sector

Extensive Scholarship - Designated collections are unparalleled in their subject matter and are equipped with strong curatorial expertise, and create partnerships with the wider research community. This combination provides an important research and learning environment.



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2.3 Key messages

The section above aims to explain Designation to those that may already be aware of the scheme but it is also useful to have some key messages around Designation that you can use when promoting the collection more widely. These will vary depending on the intended audience, examples are shown below (see 3.2 for more information):

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!

To 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
- The Museums, Libraries and Archives Council is committed to the continued recognition and promotion of these remarkable collections, so they can be fully enjoyed by many generations to come



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3 How to say it

3.1 Getting started

External communication

The first step in promoting your Designated collection is to consider the many ways you can spread the word about your institution. Exploring reciprocal links with local organisations and opportunities to exchange promotional information is an incredibly useful and cost effective way to start your advocacy work. 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

Internal communication

Remember to let people in your own organisation know about your success – your colleagues are among your most important ambassadors. Circulating articles and news about the collection as widely as possible will not only make staff and volunteers feel included in Designation success, but well informed staff are also invaluable in communicating to the wider sector. You can use a variety of means to communicate with internal audiences including:

- an internal bulletin explaining the significance of the Designation Scheme
- an article in your organisation's newsletter
- a letter of thanks to all staff and volunteers
- a thank you or congratulations notice in the staff room



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3.2 Media coverage

Press releases

Achieving Designated status is a great accomplishment and a perfect opportunity to promote the importance of your collection to your local community, council, funding bodies, MPs and councillors. A concise and informative press release is an ideal way to reach local and regional media. A template press release is provided in the appendices which can be adapted and tailored to your organisation.

Sending the press release – some things to consider:

- Method - email is best, but you can post or fax your press releases
- Contacts - make sure you have the correct contact details for your local radio, newspapers or specialist publications. For local media it is usually best to contact the news editor or news desk
- Branding - all press releases should include your logo and the Designation Scheme logo, plus the date of the release and your contact details

When to send the press release

Timing can be crucial to securing coverage, so call your local media to find out when is the best time to send your press release. If you are holding an event and want journalists and photographers to attend, give them between three and five working days notice.

A journalist will often be interested in speaking to or interviewing someone, often a chairperson, CEO, Director or Curator about your Designated status. Before you send out your press release, consider having a spokesperson available to talk to newspapers, radio or TV.

Speaking to the media

To ensure maximum impact for your press release it may be beneficial to follow up with a telephone call to local media. When calling remember that they want to hear from you, but are often under tight deadlines, so come prepared. Have your press release in front of you and highlight your key points: who, when, where and why. If you have any questions about the Designation Scheme, or feel anxious about speaking with the media please contact the MLA press office. Contact details are available in section 4 and online at http://www.mla.gov.uk/about/contact_us

Key messages

When writing a press release, calling news desks, or briefing spokespeople, it is helpful to refer to your key messages as the holder of a Designated collection. These messages will vary depending on the intended audience and can be found in section 2.3



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Radio and television interviews

Interviews with local radio and TV stations can prove incredibly beneficial when promoting your Designated collection or an event surrounding your award, examples of interview types and a checklist of top tips to remember when giving an interview are shown below.

Types of interview

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

Interview checklist

- Know what you want to get from the interview and what you want to say
- Prepare two or three key points (based around the key messages) and rehearse them before the interview
- Be clear on 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 (avoid 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 and 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 and technical terminology



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Press 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:

- Designation plaque presentation (see below)
- 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
- Celebrating the acquisition of an important new item
- A fund-raising event

Designation plaque presentation

We have provided you with a plaque to signify the inclusion of your collection to the Designation Scheme, and MLA staff can provide guidance and assistance in the preparation of a presentation event, as well as actually presenting the plaque. An official ceremony to place the plaque in a prominent place at the entrance to your collection is an ideal occasion for inviting the media and community to share in your success.

The plaques have been specifically designed to be easily affixed to most walls and we have produced guidelines on how to take care of them:

- Polish the plaque using a clean, soft cotton cloth
- To remove dirt or grease use a damp cloth and wipe dry afterwards
- DO NOT use chemical cleaners as they will damage the surface
- Beware of scratches: polished surfaces are easily scratched



Dulwich Picture Gallery receiving the Designation plaque.
Left to right: Hedley Swain, Director of Programmes MLA;
Ian Dejardin, Director of Dulwich Picture Gallery;
James Lupton, Chair of Trustees of Dulwich Picture Gallery.



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Inviting the press to an event

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. You can also issue a 'photocall' or 'press call' in advance of an event. Photocalls are for newspapers, specifically advising of a photo opportunity. Press calls are for radio or television, specifically outlining an interview or filming opportunity. Please see the template below for details of what to include in a photocall notice. You may also want to book your own photographer, to make sure you get the images you need, see section 3.3 for details.

Template photocall notice

PHOTOCALL NOTICE

World renowned artist Anthony Gormley celebrates the Designation Scheme at xxx

DATE: [insert day, date and year]

TIME: [insert time]

PLACE: [insert place including full postal address and give directions]

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].

When the press arrive, ensure that you have enough people and props for the photograph, and, wherever possible, that the museum name and Designation plaque feature 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.

What to do if the media is unable to attend an event

If the media are unable to attend your event, send them a photograph from the event with an amended release which includes information on the people who attended and any relevant or memorable comments. To create a newsworthy photograph think about what key things you want the photograph to capture - the people, building or collection. Take inspiration from the photographs you see in the press and consider how you could apply them to your museum. Keep the photograph simple - include the key people, the Designation plaque and focus on the reason for the event.



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3.3 Photography and branding

In order to instantly signpost your affiliation with the Designation Scheme please include the Designation logo in both web and print based promotions. The logo and guidelines for use are available from designation@mla.gov.uk or by contacting Sarah Waldron (see section 4).



A striking image can have great impact when promoting Designated collections. 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 for more details. If you need to commission your own photographer for an event you can do so 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 detailing your requirements, as shown in the example below.

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.

Include any relevant information on style/format etc.

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]

Parental consent is legally required when photographing children under 12 years, in line with your Child Protection Policy or policy for working with children and young people. A parental consent form will need to be filled in by parents if you are commissioning your own photographers. Please see Appendix 3: Consent form template



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3.4 Websites

You can promote your Designated collection very effectively using your organisation's website. People tend to 'scan read' website content, as such the following tips can prove very useful when writing effective web copy:

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

Your Designated collection has a venue record on the Culture24 website which you can update with information about your institution and collections. Culture24's Direct Data Entry system (DDE) is easy to use and completely free. You can use it to promote your temporary and permanent exhibitions, events and educational resources, which can now be tagged to National Curriculum areas to make them easier for teachers to find. The listings are shared with a range of other partners. An example of a venue record is this one for Plymouth City Museum & Art Gallery <http://www.culture24.org.uk/sw000024>.

For more information please contact
Rosie Clarke: Culture24 Marketing Co-ordinator
E: rosie@culture24.org.uk
T: 01273 623 336



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4 Contact details

Museums, Libraries and Archives Council
Grosvenor House
14 Bennetts Hill
Birmingham
B2 5RS
<http://www.mla.gov.uk>
T: 0121 345 7300

Paula Brikci: Designation Manager

E: paula.brikci@mla.gov.uk
T: 0121 345 7342

Sarah Waldron: Designation Assistant

E: sarah.waldron@mla.gov.uk
T: 0121 345 7308

Sunita Sharma: MLA Press Office

E: sunita.sharma@mla.gov.uk
T: 0207 273 1404

Katy McMullen: MLA Press Office

E: katy.mcmullen@mla.gov.uk
T: 0207 273 1406

Laura Smith: Senior Editorial and Brand Manager

E: laura.smith@mla.gov.uk
T: 0121 345 7365



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Appendix 1: Press release template

The following template press release can be tailored (with designation logo) to your organisation and issued to local and regional press.

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release:

[INSERT DATE]

Contact:

[INSERT NAME, TITLE, TEL, EMAIL]

[INSERT ORGANISATION'S WEBSITE ADDRESS (IF AVAILABLE)]

[Insert name of organisation] gains national quality standard

[Insert name of organisation] in [insert name of town] has just been officially awarded Designated status by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA).

[Insert paragraph here about the organisation and any other information of note. For example: The organisation, which holds a fine archaeology collection, has recently completed new displays of the collection.]

The MLA's 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. [Insert name of organisation]'s award proves that it delivers the highest standards, meeting the guidelines on how it is run, how it looks after its collections and the services it provides its visitors.

[Insert name and job title
eg Chairman, Director, curator, etc] commented:

"[insert quote. For example: how pleased / thanks to staff taking part / what this means for the organisation]."

Andrew Motion, Chair of MLA, said: "Being awarded Designated status is an impressive achievement. It recognises the high standard and service that [insert name of organisation] provides and acknowledges the hard work of the staff."

End

Notes to editors: [Insert any other relevant information about the organisation here].

1. The MLA is the government's agency for museums, libraries and archives. Leading strategically, we promote best practice to inspire innovative, integrated and sustainable services for all. Visit <http://www.mla.gov.uk>



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Appendix 2: Photography 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 will 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 organisation. 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

Personal details

Name of child/young person/individual:

Name of parent/guardian (where applicable)*:

Address (parent/guardian or individual):

Postcode:

Signed (parent/guardian/individual)*:

Signed (young person aged 12-16):

*Always for a child 0-12 years.

Recommended but not essential for young people aged 12-16. Not required for individuals 16+

Personal details

Name of child/young person/individual:

School/organisation details

Name of school/organisation:

Address of school/organisation (where applicable):

Postcode:

Date:



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Appendix 3: Letter to external stakeholders

The following letter should be on headed paper (with the Designation Scheme logo) and include a phone number with email address and the organisation's website address if available. The letter can be amended according to who it is addressed to and the key messages you need to communicate.

LETTER TO EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

Date

Address

Dear XXX

[Insert name of organisation]'s new Designated status

[Insert name of organisation] has just been awarded Designated status from the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA). This award demonstrates that the [organisation]'s collection is of outstanding national and international importance.

We are very proud to have been awarded this status and would like to [insert message appropriate to the addressee. For example, invite you to the organisation to see the Designation plaque and experience the outstanding collection. Or, take this opportunity to inform you about the education and learning services the [organisation] can offer you and the pupils in your school].

If you have any queries, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

[Insert name]

[Insert job title]



Leading strategically, we promote best practice in museums, libraries and archives, to inspire innovative, integrated and sustainable services for all.

For more information on the Designation Scheme please see the MLA website at: <http://www.mla.gov.uk>, or contact:

Paula Brikci: Designation Manager

E: paula.brikci@mla.gov.uk
T: 0121 345 7342

Sarah Waldron: Designation Assistant

E: sarah.waldron@mla.gov.uk
T: 0121 345 7308