

# **National Print Museum Collection Policy**

**Compiled by the  
National Print Museum  
Curatorial Committee**

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## **Museum Background, History & Current Collections Policy and Practice**

The National Print Museum was established in 35 Lower Gardiner Street, Dublin in 1990 and officially opened in 1996 in the former Garrison Chapel of Beggars Bush Barracks in Dublin 4. The Museum was established to document the history of printing in Ireland, to retain the skills relating to the craft of printing and to create a permanent working exhibition of printing, from movable type, since its introduction to Ireland in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

The main collector was a former compositor and trade union official, Sean Galavan, and a group of volunteers from the printing industry in Ireland. Items relating to the hot metal industry were donated from all over Ireland from 1980s.

The first collection policy was drafted in 1998 and this was revised in 2003. No complete records were kept of donors during the 13-year period of collecting from 1985 to 1998.

### **Mission Statement**

*The National Print Museum collects, documents, preserves, exhibits, interprets and makes accessible the material evidence of the printing craft and fosters associated skills of the craft in Ireland.*

### **1 Collections Policy**

- a) This policy document regulates the acquisition of items to the collection of the National Print Museum.
- b) The policy document will replace any previous documents and practices relating to the acquisition of items to the collection of the National Print Museum.
- c) The document will be reviewed on a yearly basis by the curatorial committee and any proposed changes will be submitted for formal approval by the Board of Directors of the National Print Museum.
- d) The National Print Museum has a collection of over 10,000 objects that covers the whole range of the printing craft in Ireland. The collection comprises printing machinery and artefacts including printing blocks, metal and wooden movable type, ephemera, photographs, books, pamphlets, periodicals and one banner.
- e) There are no items in the collection on loan. Until 2003 there was no comprehensive documentation system in place. Therefore approximately 80% of the collection has no provenance details. It is hoped that by December 2004 that the Museum will have transfer of title forms completed for approx. 80% of the collection.

## **2 Rules of Collecting**

- a) The National Print Museum will acquire items for the collection by donation, bequest, field collecting and in special circumstances by loan or purchase.
- b) The curators will have delegated authority and responsibility for acquiring or rejecting objects for the collection, ensuring that the collection is housed or stored adequately and for its maintenance, conservation and documentation to the best of their ability within the scope of the resources that are available annually to fulfill these responsibilities.
- c) In the event that items are offered to the Museum, which are not relevant to the collection, the Museum will endeavour to redirect the would-be-donor to an institution where the item may be more appropriately housed.
- d) Any items that are subject to special constraints or conditions, which are offered to the Museum, will be dealt with on a case-to-case basis. In some cases it may be deemed necessary to place particular issues concerning acquisition before the Board of the Museum for decision.
- e) No item will be accepted on a long-term loan basis to the National Print Museum. Items that enter the Museum on loan will have a defined period for display or consultation. This period will be agreed in writing between the curators and the owner of the item or items at the time of the deposit.
- f) In relation to the acquisition of archives, photographs and printed material, the National Print Museum will be guided by the 'Code of Practice on Archives in the Republic of Ireland' or similar Codes and by any professional archival advice which it may be necessary to seek from time to time.
- g) In circumstances where the acquisition of an item would result in significant implications in terms of storage, conservation, display or other financial outlay, the matter will be referred to the Board of Directors of the National Print Museum for decision.
- h) All items acquired by the Museum will be fully documented and permanent records will be kept by the Museum staff. Additionally, the National Print Museum undertakes to conserve and maintain all items within its collection and, as far as is possible in accordance with best professional conservation practices and advice.
- i) The National Print Museum will retain full discretion over such items as may be at any time be displayed in the Museum's exhibitions.
- j) All items acquired for the collection should be given outright with clear transfer of ownership to the Museum. Particular requests or proposed conditions

associated with donations will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of the curators and Board.

- k) The acquisitions policy of objects for the collection of the Museum may become inactive or passive in the event of inadequate storage or exhibition facilities for further collections or in respect of the acquisition of a specific proposed item or items.
- l) The Museum will endeavour to maintain the artefacts in working order and put in place a plan to retain the skills of composing and printing for future generations.

### **3 Collecting Period & Area**

- a) The collection policy relates to the period in Ireland of printing from movable type, since its introduction to Ireland in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.
- b) The National Print Museum will acquire artefacts, which it currently does not hold within its collection including;
  - An example of an early wooden built printing press
  - Ink balls used to apply the ink
  - Handmade punches
  - Handmade matrices
  - Hand cast type
- c) The Museum will maintain & build a collection of early iron hand presses from the 19<sup>th</sup> century and collect additional required spare parts and artefacts relating to such presses.
- d) The Museum will maintain and build a collection of mechanised equipment used for printing since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century following the industrial revolution and some early film setting equipment.
- e) The Museum will add to its collection of machine made matrices for typefaces in all point sizes;
  - For Monotype production
  - For linotype & Intertype production
  - For Ludlow type production
- f) Necessary required spare parts for maintenance of Monotype keyboards, Monotype casters, linotype & Intertype machines and Ludlow casters will be collected.
- g) The Museum will also collect, where suitable, automated printing presses of different designs and construction i.e.;
  - Platens of all types

- Flatbed cylinder presses
- Proofing presses
- Rotary presses
- Galley presses
- Silk screen and offset lithography machines

Where possible, necessary spare parts for maintaining such presses will be acquired.

- h) Within the collection additional cases of suitable movable type in all point sizes and typefaces, wooden type and metal type for recycling shall also be accumulated.
- i) The National Print Museum shall also endeavour to do the following:
- Obtain additional books and publications related to printing to add to the museum's library and make these books and publications available for research and lending where resources permit.
  - Collect relevant printed ephemera, showing examples of different printing methods and design.
  - Add to the museums collection suitable different types of printing blocks i.e. wood engraved blocks, woodcut blocks, line and half tone plates in various metals.
  - Collect any artefacts specifically related to Irish printing.
  - Collect any other suitable artefacts or equipment related to printing in Ireland since the 16<sup>th</sup> century.
- j) The museum will build its collection of book binding equipment used for binding by hand over the centuries i.e. sewing frames, nipping presses, book clamps, finishing presses, hand decorative rolls, fellets, burnishers, hand letters in different typefaces and point sizes, peering knives, bookbinding hammers, bone folders, band nipping tools, and other tools used to mould and shape l leather.
- k) The National Print Museum will foster relations with other museums with a view to exchanging other information, publications, skills etc which will benefit the knowledge of the collection and help in placing the museum in a better established international context.

#### **4 Conclusion**

The curatorial committee will review this collection policy on an annual basis from February 2004 and any proposed changes should be placed before the Board of Directors of the National Print Museum for approval.