

PRINCIPLES FOR BORROWING



Learning about the Staffordshire Hoard.
Photo: Andy Stammers © Birmingham Museums Trust

Loans between museum, galleries and other cultural organisations are partnerships. These partnerships are most effective when both parties consider the perspective of the other, collaborate to meet each other's objectives and pragmatically share time and resources. In the spirit of partnership, those entering into an agreement to borrow are asked to:

FIND THE MOST SUITABLE OBJECT AVAILABLE

- › Undertake thorough research of potential objects to fit your subject.
- › Don't assume that the best object for your purposes will be in a national collection - explore a wide variety of lenders.
- › Don't assume that the best object for your purposes is one that is on display, explore the museum's database and talk to curators at the museum if possible, to understand what is in store.
- › If you approach an institution for a 'star' object, the loan may need a longer lead in time or not be possible if the object is on display elsewhere. However, if this is the ideal object for your work, don't be afraid to ask.

- › Be flexible: if your ideal object is not available, work with the lending institution to identify an alternative.

LEAVE ENOUGH LEAD-IN TIME

- › The amount of time it takes to borrow an object varies between institutions - your schedule may differ from that of the lending body.
- › Therefore, it is important to make informal enquiries as early as possible. For example, if you need to submit a formal loan request 12 months in advance of borrowing, we recommend that you begin a conversation 15 months in advance.
- › Make sure you are speaking to the right person in the right department, who can give you the most accurate advice.

READ THE DOCUMENTS CAREFULLY SO YOU ARE FULLY AWARE OF THE TERMS, CONDITIONS AND COSTS OF BORROWING

- › The conditions of borrowing are not a formality and it is crucial to digest them properly to make sure your institution can meet the standard. If they are not provided early in the process, you can either find an institution's conditions online or ask the lender.

- › If some conditions are problematic, don't be afraid to start a conversation about workarounds or alternatives with the lender. You can also seek clarification if anything in the terms is unclear.
- › These conditions may also indicate the costs of borrowing – including expenditure on conservation, mounting, crating, framing, glazing, couriers and transportation. Again, good communication is important: let the lender know as soon as possible if you can afford these costs and would like to go ahead.

MAKING A STRONG FORMAL APPLICATION

If your initial research and enquiries seem promising, make a strong case for borrowing in your formal application. Points to emphasise include:

- › Why this object is most suitable for your exhibition or research i.e. what is unique, timely and/or exciting about the opportunity.
- › The outcomes that may benefit the lender, as well as yourselves e.g. research, publications, researching new audiences, contributing to their KPIs.
- › All of the practical and contextual information that will inform the decision-making process e.g. exhibition title, dates, audience, other exhibits etc.

- › Ensure you provide the lender with all the information they require in a timely way e.g. facilities, security and environmental information, display case details, designs for the exhibition, other objects that will be displayed, your timetable etc.

BE A GOOD PARTNER

- › Be open, flexible and pragmatic in your approach to borrowing - remember potential lenders may also be under pressure and needing to manage staff time and resources.
- › Work together to find solutions. For example, you may work with the lender to identify transport which meets the criteria and is available in your area.
- › Use the opportunity of the loan for mutual publicity. Ensure you provide appropriate credit and acknowledgement of the loan, and give the lender time to review publicity materials.



Conservation. Photo: Stewart Attwood
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These principles were written following a series of workshops bringing together registrars from museums of all sizes, convened by the National Museum Directors' Council and the Touring Exhibitions Group (see page 29 for further information).