Documentation -
Why Bother?

Because …

· it will help you meet [Arts Council England] Accreditation requirements

· your museum will gain credibility with governing bodies, funding agencies, potential donors and the general public

· you know what you've got

· you can find things quickly

· if something is lost you have full details of the object available and can maximise your chance of finding it

· it will help answer enquiries from other curators, researchers and the general public

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· it will help identify potential topics for exhibitions, find exhibits and prepare catalogues

· it will help you look after objects in your care

· you can prove legal ownership of an item

· if something is stolen you can provide a full description to the police

· it can foster co-operation between museums by sharing information and databases

· it will ensure information doesn't die with the curator

Accreditation Requirements – Documentation
'The principles are that a museum should know at any time exactly for what items it is legally responsible, and where each item is located.'

'They represent good practice and enable museums to fulfil their fundamental responsibilities for collections and the information associated with them.'

Accreditation requires the following as a *minimum* standard, based on SPECTRUM: The UK Museum Documentation Standard:

· Entry and Exit Records
· Location and Movement recording
· Accession Records
· Security copy of Accession Records
· Marking and Labelling
· Information Retrieval
· Loan Records
· Retrospective documentation, with plan and timescale
· Documentation procedural manual

Documentation for Collections Management - the 21 SPECTRUM Procedures

· Pre-entry
· Object Entry
· Loans In
· Acquisition
· Inventory Control – security of data
· Location and movement control
· Transport
· Cataloguing – record content
· Object condition checking and technical assessment
· Conservation and collections care
· Rights Management
· Risk management
· Insurance management
· Valuation control

· Audit
· Use of collections – access, research, exhibitions, education and handling
· Object Exit
· Loans out
· Loss and Damage
· De-accession and disposal
· Retrospective documentation

Useful websites for collections management are;

Collections Trust la.or/ http://www.collectionstrust.org.uk/

Collections Link JUST PRACTICAL ADVICE http://www.collectionslink.org.uk/

Long term Preservation of Information

Paper based information

· Backup copies of resource in another medium, e.g. Accession registers on microfiche.

· Storing resources in a secure place, such as a fireproof safe or off-site.

· Ensuring the use of archival quality materials for storage of significant information.

Digital information

· Ensuring users have access to the resource by creating a paper copy, or

· Putting a copy of the database on a stand alone computer or onto a network, or

· Providing access to the database on the Internet

· Making regular backups of resources and storing them in a secure place, such as a fireproof safe or off-site.

· Regularly testing backup procedures.

· Ensuring resources are protected against 'hackers' and computer viruses.

· Protecting the resources from accidental damage by inexperienced users.

· Ensuring the resource is migrated to a new format or medium as required to continue accessibility.