



THE COLLEGE OF
OPTOMETRISTS

BOA Museum Access Policy 2019-2024

July 2019

Introduction

The College of Optometrists is the Professional, Scientific and Examining Body for Optometry in the United Kingdom, working for the public benefit. It was formed in 1980 by an amalgamation of the British Optical Association, the Scottish Association of Opticians and the examining function of the Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers. It is registered as a charity and was granted a Royal Charter of Incorporation in 1995.

The College inherited the British Optical Association (BOA) Museum (founded 1901) from its predecessor body. The BOA Museum's *Mission Statement* is:

The collections of the British Optical Association Museum are a nationally important resource for learning about the history and practice of optometry, ophthalmic optics and related subjects, promoting the optometry profession and raising public awareness of its past and present importance to society.

This document sets out the museum policy of the College by which it will be guided in its provision of access to its building, collections and associated information. 'Access' is defined as the opportunity to visit the museum, to view its displays, engage with its learning opportunities and/or research its reserve collections, and to engage with it remotely, either through marketing materials, by contacting museum staff or interacting with the museum electronically, especially via the website. Whether an interaction with it is physical or virtual, the museum aims to provide its services in an 'accessible' way, for example by facilitating visits for individuals and groups of different ages and backgrounds, or in its use of language and technical terms. It is recognised that optometry is a difficult scientific subject that is not always easily explained.

This is the College's second Museum Access Policy. The first, an 'Access Policy Statement' was approved in February 2014 and this plan is an extension and revision of that, offering more detail on what the museum actually does and outlining the particular barriers to access (real or potential) that the museum seeks to overcome. The museum completed the self-assessment *MLA Access for All Toolkit – Enabling inclusion for museums, libraries and archives*, in June 2019 and the additions to this policy have been guided by that.

The adoption and regular review of this policy is a requirement of the UK Museums Accreditation Scheme (*Accreditation Standard*, November 2018, section 7.1).

It operates alongside, and is to be read in conjunction with:

BOA Museum Forward Plan 2019-2021
BOA Museum Care and Conservation Policy 2019-2024
BOA Museum Collections Development Policy 2019-2024
BOA Museum Documentation Policy 2019-2024

Name of museum: British Optical Association Museum (no 2069)

Name of governing body: The Board of Trustees, The College of Optometrists

Date on which this plan was approved by governing body: 17 July 2019

Policy review procedure: The museum access policy will be reviewed from time to time, at least once every five years.

Date at which this plan is due for review: 17 July 2024

Any major amendments made since the last full review are listed below:

July 2019

- Reference to collapsible wheelchair ramp added.
 - Full Building Tour fee amended.
 - Serbo-Croat added to list of languages spoken by staff colleagues.
 - Additional reference to relevant legislation and code of ethics.
 - Reference to free wi-fi added.
 - Reference to out-of-hours events added.
 - Note on acceptable payment methods added.
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1. Commitment on Access

In accordance with the *BOA Museum Mission Statement* (see above) and the published College *Values* (appended) and to meet our commitments as an Accredited Museum we will:

- Aim to make the museum displays, collections, services and programming accessible to all, for learning, research and enjoyment. This will include an emphasis, but not an exclusionary concentration, on adult visitors.
- Endeavour to remove all unnecessary barriers to users, be those physical, sensory, intellectual, cultural, attitudinal, geographical, technological or financial. The aim is to ensure that all potential users feel that the museum is, or could be 'for them'. The museum recognises that its primary users are often not alone but accompanied by partners, family members (including children), colleagues or carers, all of whom should be welcomed and provided for.
- Aim to adopt best operational practices in museum activities and policies and to implement changes, where appropriate, as part of the *BOA Museum Forward Plan*.
- Adhere to all relevant legislation, including the Equality Act, 2010 (notably the nine protected characteristics) and be guided by the *Museums Association Code of Ethics*, 2015. <https://www.museumsassociation.org/download?id=1155827>
- Ensure that museum staff and/or volunteers are trained and developed, where necessary, to be fully conversant with, and to implement, these practices and policies. Furthermore, to ensure that all employment and volunteering opportunities are as widely accessible as possible.
- Undertake to periodically monitor and review our performance and take corrective action where necessary. We will strive continually to identify issues concerning access to our collections and/or their associated information. We will do this through ongoing self-assessment, monitoring the Museum Visitor Book, Feedback cards and reviews on Google/Trip Advisor or social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, and through consultation with our members, users and other bodies in the optical and healthcare sectors, and the local community.

- Use our in-house expertise and close working relations with eyesight charities to provide improved access to those with visual/other sensory impairments, by ensuring that the museum offers a range of visual, tactile and audio experiences.
- Cover (in particular) the topic of access for the visually and sensorily impaired as part of our museum interpretative strategy. In the past this has included temporary exhibitions about guide dogs, low vision services and Braille writing. We will also offer advice to other museums on these topics.
- Welcome feedback, respond positively and endeavour to act on all reasonable requests.
- Maintain the museum's standing as a participant in the local community, for instance through collaboration with nearby cultural attractions such as the Benjamin Franklin House and liaison with the Northbank Business Improvement District (BID), including their street ambassadors, and the Westminster Guide Lecturers Association. This may involve activities such as joint tours, briefings, local loans, mutual distribution of publicity materials etc.
- Restrict access only in as much as staffing and premises require and in order to strike a fair balance between access and the safety, security, care and management of the collections.

2. Visitors

We will:

- Provide pre-visit information by various means including online content, a printed publicity leaflet, or over the telephone.
- Open by prior appointment on Mondays to Fridays between 9.30am and 5.00pm (last entry). Full Building Tours will be subject to availability.
- Ensure that visitors are made to feel welcome on arrival and are put at ease, and that any promotional activities present the museum as a welcoming, non-threatening and inclusive destination.
- Provide a curator-conducted guided tour to all visitors.
- Make the displays accessible to as wide an audience as possible, and show a wide range of items from the collections, varying the topics covered through the regular rotation of the items on 'permanent' display. We will always aim to include a number of child-friendly exhibits and objects of different international origins.
- Mount temporary exhibitions to showcase items not normally on display. Sometimes the museum will also use the temporary exhibition programme to form partnerships with other museums and organisations, or artists specialising in 'the visual' (including visual disability), to borrow items from their collections or contemporary works of art.
- Hold occasional special events, sometimes out-of-hours, or in conjunction with London-wide festivals such as MED London and Open House London.

Overcoming Physical and Sensory Barriers - The College building has had a number of adaptations to make access easier for those with physical and sensory disabilities including:

- High-contrast front door mat.
- Textured strips on stair treads leading to the first floor.
- Collapsible wheelchair ramp that may be used on the front step (prior notice required). All areas of the building containing exhibits are now accessible to wheelchairs or child buggies. Unfortunately it is not currently possible within the

building to provide a disabled toilet, however information on accessing facilities at the adjacent Charing Cross railway station or the nearby National Gallery, can be provided verbally, will be sign-posted within the museum and is already published on the visiting pages of the museum website.

- Accessible lift serving all public floors, with voice announcements and raised control buttons.
- Emergency lighting.

The museum also offers the following services:

- A variety of means to book a visit (semi-automated online form, email link or telephone number, with voicemail service).
- Online information on how to find us, arrival, disabled access (including parking), where to eat and where to go next.
- Unisex toilet and washing facility.
- Free drinking water machine.
- Printed museum leaflet, serving as both a promotional tool and a souvenir of a visit.
- Loan of collapsible stools on the gallery for older visitors or those with difficulty in standing for long periods. Plenty of seating available during First floor tours.
- Loan of hand magnifiers for visually impaired visitors or any other visitor who would benefit.
- Labels and text panels produced in line with RNIB guidelines on legibility and readability. We aim to avoid the positioning of labels in positions of shadow, to place them so that they can be read up-close, angled as appropriate. All new labelling will be done in sans-serif Arial font.
- Large print copies of all our permanent and temporary text panels and labels may be requested and printed on demand.
- Although the primary means of presenting the museum is by first-person (spoken) interpretation, via the guided tour in English, we provide an ever-increasing number of captioned exhibits, together with a rolling loop of video films and photographic slide shows.
- We offer exhibits for handling to all visitors (a handling collection), as well as dedicated handling tours for the visually impaired, utilising objects that have been assessed for the purpose in accordance with the *BOA Museum Care and Conservation Policy*.
- Free information leaflets on eye health matters and related topics including ageing and dementia, approved by the Plain English campaign.

Overcoming Economic Barriers - Entrance to the museum is generally free to all visitors. We make an affordable £10 per person charge for extended 'Full Building Tours', with fee waivers for College Fellows and Members, members of the Museums Association, children aged 7 and under, or persons on the sight loss register.

Access to special events such as Open House will be free of charge.

The museum shop includes cheap postcards, low-priced souvenirs and second hand books.

Overcoming Cultural Barriers - In extreme circumstances during a visit, the Curator may call on colleagues with language skills in French, Spanish, Serbo-Croat, Polish and Russian. Although this would not extend to offering foreign language tours, it might permit the answering of specific queries or the rendering of individual assistance in an emergency.

Interpretative material (including web content) has, on relevant occasions, been translated into Dutch, German and Polish and the museum is always looking for imaginative ways to open up its international collections to non-English-speaking visitors.

3. Groups

In addition to those affecting individual and family visitors, the following policies will apply:

Overcoming Physical and Sensory Barriers - Due to space restrictions, the advertised maximum group size will be 25. Where larger groups express an interest in visiting the Curator will discuss with group leaders the options for dividing groups.

The museum has received visits from groups of people with visual impairment, the after-effects of stroke and children from a school for pupils with special educational needs. In each case we welcome such groups and ask organisers to detail any special needs at the point of booking.

We will continue to work especially with the University of the Third Age, encouraging U3A groups to visit the museum, and offering off-site talks either in preparation for, or as follow-up to such visits.

Overcoming Economic Barriers – Tour fees are generally waived for organised school groups, except when additional provision is required.

Payment will be accepted in a variety of ways including cash, cheque or VISA/Mastercard.

Overcoming Intellectual and Attitudinal Barriers - All visits involve a variety of elements (looking, listening and handling) which can cater for different learning styles and abilities.

Museum staff are trained in customer care and disability awareness issues (including learning disability and mental health) and will continue to receive appropriate training.

4. Researchers

Most of the museum collection is in reserve store and the museum is committed to bringing these objects out of store and promoting research into them. Any visitor may request, within reason, items to be brought to them from the store on demand, however serious *bona fide* researchers are encouraged to discuss their needs with us prior to visiting.

Overcoming Intellectual Barriers - The Curator will work with researchers to explain technical terms, advise on the development of the optometry profession. In conjunction with College Library staff he will provide guidance on how to use our various books, journals and e-resources.

Overcoming Physical and Sensory Barriers - Access to the store itself is not usually possible for researchers due to safety and security concerns and our inability to provide a suitable working environment in that area, however stored objects will be brought to researchers for study in the Library or other such space as is deemed

appropriate.

Objects may also be lent to researchers at recognised institutions for research to take place off-site. In all cases the desire to promote research for the dissemination of knowledge will be balanced by concern for the care of the collections.

Overcoming Economic Barriers - Access to the collection for study purposes is free of charge.

The Museum curator will also conduct research in response to public enquiries without charge, as long as the request is reasonable and not too time-consuming.

Where direct access to material is not possible we will endeavour to make alternative arrangements such as the electronic supply of photographs, photocopies or scanned material. A small charge may be made for such services.

Free wi-fi is available to researchers in the College Library.

The museum does not support research that may be deemed to put at risk the reputation of the College of Optometrists, or which is considered to be entirely commercial in intent. We may opt to facilitate the latter type of research in return for an appropriate fee. The museum does not offer financial valuations and does not discuss the monetary worth of its collections.

5. Remote access

Overcoming Physical and Cultural Barriers - The museum places a particular emphasis on extending remote access via its dedicated section on the College of Optometrists website (www.college-optometrists.org/museum) and its online catalogue (www.museyeum.org).

It aims to produce content with particular regional or international appeal in order to serve non-visitors as well as those past or future visitors wishing to prepare for a visit or engage in further post-visit study.

Overcoming Intellectual Barriers - The Museum will ensure that all online information is updated regularly.

The Museum Curator will occasionally blog about historical matters and can provide content to College social media outlets. He is also available to deliver off-site talks, lectures and object handling sessions.

Audio-tours relating to the College collection of paintings are available free on the izi.TRAVEL website. (Transcripts of this content can also be supplied on request).

The museum particularly welcomes requests for the loan of its collections from other Accredited museums and certain other reputable institutions. We operate an image-licensing service so that our collections may feature on external websites such as www.antiquespectacles.com and Art UK (paintings and sculpture).

All enquiries and other electronic interactions will be processed in accordance with the College of Optometrists procedures, in line with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR, May 2018).

The Museum will publish research about its history, its collections and the history of the subject it covers.

Overcoming Technological Barriers – The College website is mobile-compliant and suitable for viewing across a wide range of browsers.

Most information can, alternatively, be supplied by post, telephone or in person.

6. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed by 17 July 2024.

This policy will be published online as part of the museum website.

Submitted for approval by the Board of Trustees on
17 July 2019

I confirm that the above plan was so approved

Dr Mary-Ann Sherratt
Chair of the Board of Trustees

College values

These values reflect the way College staff, members and fellows carry out their daily work:

- We act with honesty and integrity
- We work in a fair, open and transparent way
- We encourage, listen to and act upon feedback
- We provide high quality services
- We embrace diversity and people's differences, and recognise each individual's contributions
- We show support and consideration in our dealings with colleagues
- We are committed to our own personal and professional development