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# National Museum of Ireland

## Collections Online Policy

### Version 1.0

14 September 2025

### 1. Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this document is to state the policy of the National Museum of Ireland (NMI) with regard to its Collections Online service.

1.2 It does not provide a full statement of standards for metadata, right management and digital asset creation. These are referenced in associated policies relevant to that area of work. See Linked Documents.

1.3 This document covers:

- The purpose and principles of Collections Online
- Scope of Collections Online
- Governance of the service
- Reporting and Takedown
- Use of Artificial Intelligence
- Data protection, data sensitivity and inaccurate data
- Audiences

## 2. Purpose and principles

2.1 NMI publishes information online to widen and enrich access to its collections, and to enable audiences to experience their collections in new and different ways.

2.2 Data creation and online publication strategies across collections operations will not be viewed in isolation, rather they will be part of a unified organisational data management strategy.

2.3 The presumption is that *all* data is to be published unless there is a good reason not to, and the technical infrastructure will support this through use of open standards for file creation and storage, open APIs and open licensing of data (where legally appropriate).

2.4 However, collections data will not be published online where there is a legal, ethical or data quality issue which prevents this. These scenarios are covered by the Data Quality and Rights Management Policies, as well as Section 7 of this document.

2.5 Collection Online is not a website (or a product), rather it should be understood as a service.

2.6. The first iteration of Collections Online should be considered as a Minimum Viable Product (MVP), containing sufficient functionality and information to test assumptions and carry out further user research.

2.7 Not all collections information will appear online in the same format. The needs of audiences will be the primary driver of how collections information is presented to users, either through a dedicated collections online sub-domain of the main NMI site, or via an API (application programming interface) allowing users to search, combine data sets and analyse information for their own research.

## 3. Scope of Collections Online

3.1 The Collections Online service will aim to be as broad as possible in terms of coverage, given the data and technical restraints in place at the time.

3.2 The first iteration of Collections Online (MVP) will include a selection of records from:

- Art and Industry
- Irish Antiquities (including Ethnography/World Cultures)
- Irish Folk Life
- Natural History

It will exclude Archive collections which require considerable data cleaning. Library collections will be published on [WorldCat.org](http://WorldCat.org) in the first instance. It is the ambition of NMI to publish these onto the Collections Online service eventually.

3.3 The number of objects and images available online will increase over time, in line with a Collections Online Publication Strategy, approved and published annually. This will take into account resources available and current projects planned which may produce additional or enhanced collections information assets.

3.4 In addition to collections database records and associated images, Collections Online will include contextual information about Divisions and Collections holdings, as well as curated 'Stories' inspired by exhibitions or recent research activities.

3.5 Collections 'Stories' will be governed by a policy and strategy agreed by the Collections Online Project Board.

## 4. Governance of the service

4.1 The Senior Owner of the service will be the Director of Collections and Access.

4.2 Responsibility for day-to-day management of the service will sit with the CMSA/Documentation Lead, in partnership with the Head of Digital and Information Systems.

4.3 Work towards launch of an MVP and beyond will be governed by a Project Board, with support from a Content Team and Technical Team. This will be the governance structure until end of financial year 2025/2026.

4.4 From April 2026, the governance structure will be reviewed, and a decision made as to whether the service is a 'project' or an established part of NMI's business, and managed as such.

4.5 The Project Board will be made up of representatives from each collections division, as well as operational representatives for organisational governance and digital delivery. The group will meet monthly, and all meetings will be minuted.

4.6 Governance of the systems associated with the service will be as contained in the following table:

<b>Application/platform</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Lead</b>
Axiell Collections	Collections management system	CMSA/Documentation Lead
Collections Information Integration Module (CIIM)	Middleware	CMSA/Documentation Lead and Head of Digital and Information Systems

Irish Antiquities SQL db	Collections management system	Keeper, Irish Antiquities and Head of Digital and Information Systems
Collections Online	Website	CMSA/Documentation Lead and Head of Digital and Information Systems
Amazon S3 Media Store	Cloud media store	Head of Digital and Information Systems
Portfolio DAMS	Digital asset management system	Digital Imaging Officer
WordPress	Content Management System	CMSA/Documentation Lead and Head of Digital and Information Systems

## 5. Reporting and Takedown

5.1 NMI will endeavour to publish material according to legal and ethical standards, contained in the Quality Management and Rights Management Policy.

5.2 However, there may be challenges from the users of the service in the event of a perceived rights infringement, or data protection/data sensitivity breach.

5.3 In the event of a challenge from a user of the service, there is a presumption against takedown of any material on the Collections Online service.

5.4 All requests for takedown will be advanced via the agreed digitisation and publication workflow, before a decision is made.

5.5 The final decision on takedown will lie with Director of Collections and Access and the relevant Keeper.

## 6. Use of Artificial Intelligence

6.1. Use of artificial intelligence models will be a feature of the Collections Online service.

6.2 They will be used to increase the efficiency of data publication, enhance end user understanding of the content, as well as providing additional services to users. An example of where this may be used is the automated creation of 'alt text', enabling non-sighted users to understand images displayed on the site, or the use of 'conversational' search functions.

6.3 At all times NMI will follow the [Irish Government's Guidelines for Responsible use of Artificial Intelligence in the Public Sector](#), including clearly indicating where AI has been used in the provision of the Collections Online service.

## 7. Data Protection, Data Sensitivity and inaccurate data

7.1 NMI takes data protection and data sensitivity of subjects referenced or depicted in collections very seriously and in line with Irish and EU law.

7.2. All collections records and images selected to go online will be reviewed against organisational [Data Protection Policy](#) for any breach of [General Data Protection Regulation EU 2016/679](#) or the [Data Protection Act 2018](#)..

7.3 Data sensitivity is a more nuanced issue and while not a legal requirement, NMI will take care not to publish images or references to subjects who would likely be offended or open to discrimination if they were published. This could include references to people's political views, trade union activities or activism. If in doubt the image should not be published. For new acquisitions, these issues would most likely have been discussed with the donor at the point of transfer of title.

7.4 Due to the nature of how some Irish Antiquities data is used for civic planning, it may be necessary to redact some information which is considered inaccurate, which might otherwise meet minimum standards.

## 8. Audiences

8.1. Audiences and their requirements are of paramount importance to the success of the Collections Online service.

8.2. To this end, once the MVP is launched, NMI is committed to undertaking user research to understand how the service fits with both existing and new users' expectations. This will include museum visitors, academic users, schools and informal learning, as well as general users of the service. Over time, content and services will develop to satisfy the needs of these audiences.

8.3. The NMI is committed to the development and use of a public API to allow data sharing and interchange of its collection information with other organisations, such as Europeana. Research will be carried out to confirm the audiences for the API, and then a strategy for publicising to the appropriate parties.

## 9. Linked Documents

Rights Management Policy  
Photography Policy  
Quality Management Policy