

# Akaroa Museum Research and Access Policy

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## **Statement of Purpose:**

*Akaroa Museum collects, preserves, researches, interprets, displays and otherwise makes available to the public, material and information relating to the natural and cultural heritage of Banks Peninsula.*

Akaroa Museum is owned and operated by Christchurch City Council. This policy was adopted by the Akaroa Museum Advisory Committee on 28/11/2011. This policy is due to be reviewed by 28/11/2016.

## **1. Purpose of this policy**

Akaroa Museum is a public museum and its collections are held for the public good on behalf of the community and the wider public, effectively in trust. Akaroa Museum is owned and operated by the Christchurch City Council. Museum staff provide museum users with a public service.

The Museum encourages and facilitates access to the Museum, its collections and its services, both intellectually and physically, but must weigh the right of access against the physical and cultural well being of the collections. The purpose of this policy is to help balance these competing demands, and to assist external researchers in understanding decisions made by staff regarding access to collections.

## **2. Akaroa Museum and research**

Objects are collected by the Museum with thought to their value as evidence. The range of objects in the collections is outlined in the *Akaroa Museum Acquisitions and Disposals Policy*.

Research is a basic museum activity undertaken in the management, display and interpretation of the collections. Answering research enquiries from sources external to the Museum is a service offered by the Museum that assists individual or group intellectual access to the collections, promotes interest and understanding of history and heritage, and may help in the development of knowledge about the past, or in inspiring creative responses to collections. This aspect of the service relates directly to the Museum's purpose.

Museum research may be undertaken by staff, Museum volunteers, or agents contracted to the Museum or Council. All research is valued and all researchers are respected as Museum users, and staff will do their best to assist a researcher in their enquiries.

Research undertaken by the public related to the Museum's collections (objects) or information that the Museum accumulates as part of its operations (for example, genealogical material) is also a normal public function of the Museum.

For auditing, reporting and security purposes the Museum records research enquiries.

## **3. Types of research enquiries**

### 3.1 Information enquiries

These are requests for data, or interpretations of data (information), which, if they can be answered by staff, will take the form of a written or verbal answer. These may range in type, for example, a short telephone conversation or email, or a formal or informal presentation to group or class.

### 3.2 Object enquiries

3.2.1 Object enquiries are generally either requests for physical access to objects in the Museum's collections or requests to identify objects brought into the Museum.

3.2.2 Physical access to objects in the collections is normally through the gallery displays and changing temporary exhibitions. However, researchers may require access to objects not on display, and wish to interrogate the objects by close examination to develop data for particular research purposes. These enquiries normally result in a visit to the Museum or requests from staff for object photography or other specific research.

3.3.3 Requests to identify objects brought into the Museum by a member of the public are met in accordance with the terms specified on the Object Entry Form, as follows:

Akaroa Museum will act to identify object(s) for owners, in reference to its own collections. The Museum may refer the owner to other specialists. The Museum offers this service in good faith and will accept no liability for information that turns out to be incorrect or misleading.

The Museum cannot give valuations.

### 3.3 Good faith

Staff will normally conduct a limited level of research on either type of enquiry on behalf of the researcher. This may not be enough to supply an answer to the enquiry, and may only establish that in-depth research is required or that the enquiry cannot be answered by staff here (in which case staff will endeavour to refer the enquirer other experts). The Museum answers enquiries in good faith and will accept no liability for information that turns out to be incorrect or misleading.

### 3.4 Commercial gain

Both types of enquiry (3.1 and 3.2) are a specific request for a particular interest rather than a general one, and therefore require staff to shift from general public service to individual service. Where the recipient is using the enquiry for commercial gain, fees may apply which reflects the use of public service for commercial gain. Charges will also be made for photocopies, scans etc. provided to the enquirer.

### 3.5 Fees & charges

In all cases the Museum reserves the right to recover actual and reasonable costs associated with research requests. These are subject to change and are listed separately to this document.

## **4. Supervision of researchers**

The Museum is responsible to its community and donors to provide appropriate levels of security for the preservation and protection of its

collection. Handling is one of the greatest conservation risks to museum objects. For preventative conservation reasons staff have a duty to manage collections access and observe handling, handle objects on behalf of the researcher, or deny handling on grounds of fragility. This is a decision made on a case by case basis.

Other reasons for supervision are to provide physical security and for tracking object movement (i.e. to preserve the recorded locations of the objects and their order in storage and display). There may also be cultural reasons to take into consideration, or an embargo to enforce on objects stored nearby.

So that museum staff can offer an efficient service, staff prepare for researchers wanting access to collections. Therefore, access to collections by external researchers is offered by appointment as it requires planning by staff. The Museum's *Guidelines for Researchers* offers further guidance for researchers wanting to make such requests.

## **5. Researcher responsibilities**

In providing access to its collections, the Museum expects that researchers will recognise their responsibilities to the institution, its collection and its staff. Researchers should be organised and clear in their requests, be prepared to share their findings with the Museum and be considerate of the demands their requests make on staff time and resources. Further detail about the Museum's expectations of researchers can be found in the Museum's *Guidelines for Researchers*.

## **6. Access restrictions**

The Museum allows access to all of its collections unless there is a valid reason for restrictions. Staff may refuse access for any of the following reasons:

- access to the collections will not assist the researcher answer their enquiry (the enquiry is misplaced)
- access is precluded by conditions imposed by the donor of the object or material
- complying to the enquiry would be unethical
- more information about the research method or research outcomes are required, for example, in the case of destructive testing. In these cases a more formal research proposal may be requested (the format of this will be discussed with the researcher)
- the request would threaten the integrity of the object(s)
- the request would contravene an embargo or a cultural prohibition

- the request requires wider consultation, e.g. with Onuku runanga before permission can be granted

## **7. Review of policy**

This policy will be reviewed at least every five years.