

Research Policy

Date on which this policy was last updated and accepted by the Board: October 2024

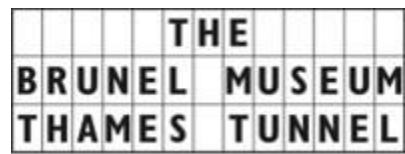
Date on which this policy will be due for review: October 2027

Collections-based research is vital to all the Brunel Museum's activities. Research into the collections held by the Museum, whether carried out by Museum staff, trustees or volunteers, or by individuals external to the Museum, informs the Museum's ongoing curatorial work – including display, cataloguing, and conservation – as well as more wide-reaching programmes and initiatives such as learning and community relations.

This policy:

- Defines *research* in the context of the Museum's operations
- Emphasises the Museum's commitment to academic freedom
- Outlines the access conditions under which the Museum makes collections it holds available for research
- Outlines the Museum's approach to public requests for the supply of information about collections for research
- Outlines the Museum's approach to publication of research resulting from access provided to collections and/or information it holds
- Outlines the Museum's current research priorities

The approaches defined in this research policy draw on, and uphold, the Museum's legal obligations as well as obligations set out in the Museum Association's *Code of Ethics* to which the Museum adheres. They also conform to the Collections Trust's SPECTRUM guidelines.

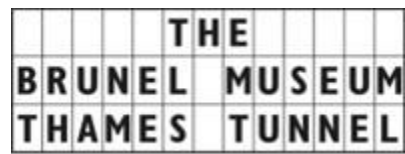


Definition of Research

For the purposes of this policy, research is broadly defined. Research encompasses both public enquiries received by the Museum as well as more intensive and/or larger-scale projects.

The Museum considers all individuals who request information or access to collections beyond that provided in displays in the physical gallery or online to be researchers. It commits to treat all researchers equally, irrespective of formal academic qualifications or other factors.

The Museum believes that varied and active research is vital to strengthening its engagement with a range of audiences, to better understanding the past, and to enabling historical collections to speak to a wide range of present day questions, concerns, and interests. To that end, where possible it endeavours to assist researchers with, and facilitate them in, their enquiries.



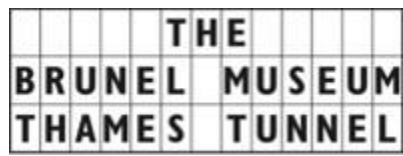
Research Potential of the Collections, and Commitment to Academic Freedom

The Museum considers that its collections will be of most interest, and of most use, to individuals working in the following areas, broadly defined:

- The history of London
- Transport history
- Engineering
- Architecture and urban design

This list is not exhaustive, and the Museum encourages research into the collections it holds from any perspective.

The Museum will not refuse access to its collection based on proposed topics of research; nor will it seek to influence or otherwise prejudice outcomes of research, in line with its commitment to academic freedom.



Research Access Conditions

The Museum believes that equitable public access to the collections it holds is a key element of its role in public life and the community. It does not impose any financial charge to allow research access to its collections.

The Museum's approach to research access seeks to balance public access to collections with the ongoing and sometimes complex conservation needs of the collections it holds in trust for public benefit. As such, while it reserves the right to impose restrictions on access to collections items, it will endeavour where possible to provide alternate means of access, such as via digital imagery or supplementary information.

The Museum does not hold nor, in line with its Collections Development Policy, does it intend to collect, objects liable to require special permits for research. This includes but not limited to: restricted, dangerous, or illegal substances; human remains; objects of dubious provenance, and/or which are subject to repatriation claims; or objects of sensitive ethnic, religious, or social significance.

The criteria by which research access to collections will be judged are the following:

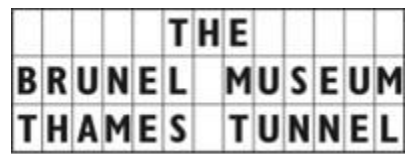
- support time needed from staff
- the physical accessibility and material stability of collections requested, including whether the object can be removed from public display if necessary
- availability of resources and/or facilities required for research
- security issues in relation to collections and their use
- possible impact on, and relationship to, research being carried out by current Museum trustees, staff, and volunteers

Requests for collections access may be made in person, over the phone, or via email. To facilitate assessment of the request, researchers are asked to identify, with their catalogue numbers, the specific objects to which they seek access.

All requests for research access to the collections will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. The Museum aims to reply within seven days of receipt of a request.

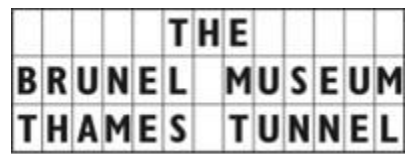
The decision as to whether a research access request be permitted rests with the Collections Access Coordinator. The reason for any refusal will be clearly communicated to the individual proposing the research.

All researchers will be asked to sign and abide by a code of conduct (attached in appendix). This confirms all researchers have read, understood, and agree to abide by, the conditions under which the Museum makes objects it holds available for research. A scanned copy of the signed code of conduct will be retained by the Museum for one year, in compliance with GDPR regulations. For all collections research activities conducted within one year of signing, no new form will be required. For all collections research



activities conducted more than one year after signing, researchers will be required to sign a new form.

All researchers using material from the collections, whether held on or offsite, will be supervised by a member of Museum staff, usually the Collections Access Coordinator. The staff member present will be responsible for ensuring safe handling of objects. It should not be expected that the staff member supervising the session be able to answer research questions posed about the collections.



Information Supply to External Individuals

Public enquiries about collections are welcomed by the Museum. The Museum holds a range of information, not all of which is made permanently public on our website. The Museum aims to respond to all public enquiries for information about collections within seven days of receipt.

The Museum cannot undertake projects of research on others' behalf, but will strive to supply useful information where legally permitted.

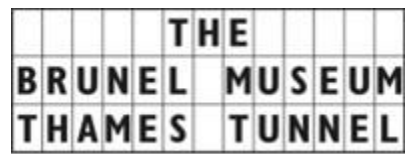
Information subject to General Data Protection Regulations or to third-party copyright restrictions will not be supplied under any circumstances. This may notably include some object provenance information.

Requests for information which, in the judgement of the Collections Access Coordinator, would impose a significant burden of time, resources, or finances on the Museum cannot be carried out. In these circumstances, the Museum may instead:

- provide a lower level of information than requested;
- provide the enquirer with some support to find the information themselves;
- provide contacts to whom the enquirer may turn to gather the information for them.

In line with both the Museum's Association Code of Ethics for Museums and the Collections Trust SPECTRUM Guidelines, the Museum will not under any circumstances provide object valuations.

The Museum reserves the right to charge a small processing fee for the supply of reproductions of documents, whether digital or physical.

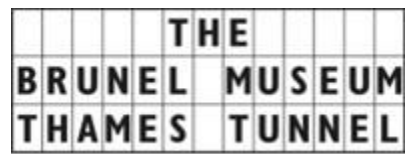


Publications

Where research conducted using resources the Museum makes available to researchers – whether objects, expertise, or time – is published, the Museum requests that it be provided with a copy of the publications concerned.

Please note that photographs of objects in the collection, or of images taken of the interiors of the Museum's buildings and galleries, are subject to copyright restrictions. Publication, for these purposes, refers to all print and digital uses, including the use of such imagery on social media.

Images of some collections objects can be licenced directly via Bridgeman Images, with whom the Museum has negotiated a contract. Images not available there, or taken by individuals themselves, must be cleared for publication with the Collections Access Coordinator. Publication of such imagery is liable to be charged.



Current Museum Research Priorities

The Museum has identified the following areas as current priorities for internal research. Research access requests which may impact on these areas should be outlined with as much detail as possible; where feasible, the Museum will seek a collaborative approach with external researchers.

- The lives of the miners of the Thames Tunnel
- The lives of the Thames Tunnel Company shareholders
- The Thames Tunnel stallholders and their merchandise
- The Thames Tunnel Fancy Fairs
- The conversion of the Thames Tunnel for railway use
- The institutional history of the Brunel Museum