



Learning About Museums



Most people collect and display something in their lives. It might be family photographs kept in albums or souvenirs/awards on a mantelpiece, assembled and displayed without any thought of being a collector. Other people form collections e.g. stamps, postcards etc

Sometimes people give their collections to museums where they are professionally cared for and where everyone can access them. The County Museum Dundalk holds in its collection many private collections that people have donated to the museum. One important collection is the PJ Carroll's collection which comprises of over 6,000 pieces relating to the tobacco factory.



Did you know that the museum was a store house for PJ Carroll's Company and that they donated to the people of Louth for a museum?

Your Collections



Do you collect anything?



What do you collect?



Why do you collect?



What will happen to your collection in the Future?





What do People Collect?

Peoples collections are very varied and often comprise of everyday items that are easily available such as football programmes, badges, postcards, bottles etc. Others are more specialised such as military items, fossils, toys. Some collections are more general.

The County Museum Dundalk collects items from the County of Louth. These are items often found, used, manufactured or owned by persons/groups/businesses from the county.



Things people collect

- ✧ small items such as coins, badges, stamps
- ✧ Large items such as buildings, cars
- ✧ valuable items such as paintings, antiques
- ✧ Items from a specific period such as Victorian clothes
- ✧ Things that belonged to famous people such as a actor/singer etc
- ✧ Popular items such as stickers, toys



What do you think people in the year 2100 will collect from the time we live in?

How do people collect things?

Different things are collected in different ways. Some collectors buy things at auction, antique shops or car boot sales. Others join clubs and swap items. Archaeologists dig them up. In Ireland all archaeological items belonged to the state and are given over to museums so the public can see them. Some items cannot be collected in a normal way, film and recordings are used to capture important events in our lives. Memories, stories or accents have to be recorded on tape.

Have a look at recording our county section in the museum and listen to some of the stories recorded by the museum.





Museums

People collect many items and often build up large collections. Collections are often housed away in peoples attics, garages and basements. Sometimes collectors want to share their collections with others and decide to donate it to a Museum where the public can enjoy it as much as they do. Museums are more than collections of collections they ensure that artefacts are properly cared for, conserved and made accessible through re- search, exhibitions and education programmes like the Junior Explorers!

Have a look at the collection of Mediterranean artefacts on the second floor gallery in the museum these were donated by the Carroll family whose grandfather collected them on his travels in the 19th century!



What Happens when a item is donated to the Museum?

Documentation

When an item is donated to the museum, the documentation officer records all the information about the object, what it looks like, who it belonged too, any interesting stories about it.



This is important as it will help people understand more about the object when it is on display. This is all re-recorded on a computer database. The museum has nearly 40,000 objects on its database.

Museum Record Sheet

These toys have been given to the Museum. Can you help us record them?

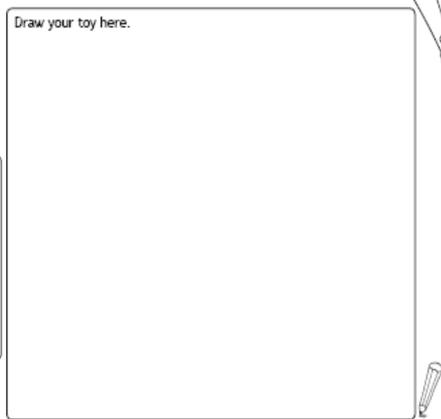
They are very old and fragile so you will need to wear cotton gloves to protect them. Choose a toy with your partner. Use the magnifying glasses to look carefully at the toys.

Describe your toy by underlining some of the words below.

cracked	colourful	plastic	red
shiny	sharp	metal	blue
scratched	smooth	fabric	yellow
dirty	rough	wood	green
clean	heavy	glass	orange
broken	light		black
bent	bendy		white
dull	hard		purple
bright			
faded			
old			

My name: _____

Draw your toy here.



Caring for the Collection



Once an object is donated to the museum it has to be cared for. New objects are examined by a

conservator and treated for any damage. The object will then be given an appropriate storage location.

Museum storage conditions are meant to protect the object and to minimize any deterioration. This often means keeping objects in a stable climate, preventing exposure to pests, minimizing any handling, and using only archival materials that will not deteriorate or harm the objects.

Human hands secrete sweat which contains acid and this can damage very delicate objects such as old photograph. That is why gloves are worn when handling objects in museums





Different types of objects have different requirements, and many museums have specialized storage areas. For example, framed paintings may be stored in racks in one room while unframed paintings are kept in large drawers in another. Some objects have extremely specialized needs.

For example, material from underwater archaeological sites may need to be kept wet, and some very rare and badly deteriorated objects

At any given time, museums display only a portion of their collections. This is often because exhibition requires much

more space than storage, and is impractical for the entire collection to be out. suited to display than others. In addition, certain objects, particularly works on paper and textiles, are damaged by light and must only be displayed for short periods of time.

