

**National Museums Scotland  
Collections Development Strategy**

## Research themes

- i) Collections and collecting  
This examines the impetus and results of collecting and covers national, organisational and individuals' practice. An important secondary theme is investigation into the preservation of collections through scientific analysis.
- ii) Understanding the natural world  
This examines areas of natural science with particular emphasis on current concerns in biodiversity, climate change and endangered species. The bulk of activity is within Natural Sciences where the collections' focus on geology and zoology drives research activity but there is some cross over to other collections such as archaeology. The main sub- themes are:
  - 1) Understanding biodiversity; through describing new species and revising old taxonomies for specific groups.
  - 2) Changing environments; the study of climate change through changes in the distribution of species and communities. Palaeontological research looks at environmental change in deep time, including events in Scotland that were crucial to the continuing development of life on Earth from the earliest land plants and air-breathing animals to pioneering land tetrapods.
  - 3) Conservation, population management and ecology; via studies in taxonomy and systematics contributing to studies on biodiversity including rare and endangered species.
  - 4) Ageing and age-related diseases; investigation of ageing process and disease in animals which can be relevant to human ageing and disease.
  - 5) Scotland's mineral and geological wealth; analysis in the fields of mineralogy, gemmology, petrology and geological processes.
- iii) Material culture: creation and use  
This looks at the relationship between objects and social relations in different areas such as visual culture, cultural heritage and memory, and anthropology of art. It allows the assessment and communication of NMS collections as they were and as they are now perceived. It ranges across national and international collections from analysis of archaeological finds, to studies in Scottish engineering, work on specific Scottish decorative art collections and modern dress design to studies on ancient Egypt and more recent Pacific cultures.
- iv) Identities and cultural contacts  
This explores how objects can enable us to understand past identities and cultural contacts. It also examines how objects from the past can influence present identities and cultural contacts. It has an international range but is linked intimately to the Scottish diaspora and Scottish history. It includes work on Scotland's military history, as well as Roman and native interaction, the aborigine collections from the Canadian Great Lakes and the ethnomusicology collection assembled by Jean Jenkins.