HELSINGIN KAUPUNGINMUSEON JULKAISU PUBLICATION OF THE HELSINKI CITY MUSEUM

LET'S TELL THE STORIES OF HELSINKI TOGETHER!

Helsinki City Museum's Collections Policy 2026–2030



On the cover The cultural history collection includes posters that document the city's public life. The major trade fair in October 1935 was the first trade fair to be held in the new exhibition hall. Curator Kati Selänniemi presents the poster collection. Photo: Henri Tuomi.

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FOREWORD

According to museum statistics, Finnish museum collections contained approximately five million objects and 28 million photographs in 2024. Of them, Helsinki City Museum's collections contained around 460,000 objects and works of art, as well as more than a million photographs. So, Helsinki City Museum's collection is not only a unique museum collection preserving Helsinki's cultural heritage but also a significant Finnish collection.

Managing a large collection and developing it in a goal-oriented manner requires planning. We want our collections to be a resource and a source of knowledge and meaningful experiences for as many Helsinki residents as possible, and we want to achieve this goal sustainably and cost-effectively.

Our philosophy is articulated in the collection policy documents, which Helsinki City Museum began drafting in 2001. We also do not conduct our collections work in a vacuum; rather, our methods and objectives in fulfilling our collections mission have evolved alongside national and international developments in the museum sector. Our thinking is guided by the museum policy programme of the Ministry of Education and Culture and the national cultural heritage strategy, while the International Council of Museums' (ICOM) Museum Definition and ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums provide the key international framework. The national Network for Collections Management and Contemporary Documentation in Finland (TAKO) has provided a platform where we have been able to develop through interaction with other Finnish museums. A significant development was the cooperation agreement signed with the Finnish Heritage Agency in 2013, which defines Helsinki City Museum's role in the national division of collecting duties. Our collections work is also guided by the City of Helsinki's strategic guidelines and the concept of the City Museum.

We have become increasingly aware of our role in shaping cultural heritage. We are aware of the power associated with our role as experts and therefore strive to collaborate as much as possible with the people of Helsinki. We are increasingly recognising that inclusion, like all our collections work, is a continuous process that takes on new forms and nuances as the operating environment changes.

Finnish museums in the 2020s view cultural heritage as part of sustainable development and seek to play an active role in shaping the future. Helsinki City Museum's collections work also aims to provide future Helsinki residents with a cultural heritage that is as diverse and polyphonic as possible.

1. HELSINKI CITY MUSEUM'S COLLECTIONS MISSION

1.1 We preserve Helsinki for the people of Helsinki

Helsinki City Museum is a museum of cultural history that documents Helsinki's cultural heritage in its collections: artefacts, photographs, archival material, art and audiovisual material that provide insight into the lives of Helsinki residents and the urban environment. The collections are the property of the City of Helsinki, and the purpose of our collections work is to preserve them for as long as possible into the future, ensuring that they are accessible to everyone.[1]

Collections are the foundation of museum work and its most important resource. The equality of all Helsinki residents is an important principle for us, and we preserve cultural heritage with the city's residents. We believe that shared knowledge and experiences strengthen people's ties to Helsinki and encourage them to preserve our shared cultural heritage. We share information about our collections openly and accessibly through various channels. Our customers can experience and use the collections in various ways at exhibitions and events, as well as online.

In our collections, we take the diverse backgrounds of Helsinki's residents and the city's many neighbourhoods into account. We also recognise that there are many different types of cultural heritage. We listen to the city's diverse voices and hope that our collections will serve as a basis for wide-ranging discussions.

Our collections work is based on research, and we operate in accordance with the ethical rules of the museum sector. In line with the goals of the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, we also take environmental, economic, cultural and social sustainability into account in our operations. We also focus on using our resources efficiently.

The Museums Act requires museums receiving state subsidies to have a collections policy in place. The Ministry of Education and Culture also emphasises the importance of systematic collections work, and that museum collections are an important resource for society. The guidelines set out in our collections policy have a long-term impact, but we update them regularly to reflect changes in society and the city.

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1 The expansion of the museum's own archaeological collection came to an end in the late 1980s. Finds from the museum's archaeological excavations have since been catalogued with the National Museum of Finland's KM inventory numbers, but the City Museum manages the finds.



Photo: Tapio Juutinen

In 2024, the City Museum participated in the contemporary documentation campaign organised by the Network for Collections Management and Contemporary Documentation in Finland (TAKO). This campaign's theme was 'Hope'. Photographer Yehia Eweis and university intern Ilta Lahti documenting the Finnish Red Cross's Friend Activities.

1.2 What challenges do we face?

The operating environment of the City Museum has changed significantly since the previous Collections Policy was completed in 2019. At that time, the diversity of Helsinki's residents was recognised as a challenge in collecting, and we have since taken steps to incorporate this into our collections work. The development of digital culture has opened up new opportunities to make cultural heritage accessible to the people of Helsinki, but at the same time, it challenges traditional assumptions about what constitutes an object and what it means for an object to be authentic. Identifying and documenting intangible cultural heritage, as well as everyday life mediated by digital technology and the material cultural heritage relevant to it, is a new area for the museum.

The museum should be able to document the digital services and apps used by the city's residents. For example, public transport tickets are mostly purchased through mobile apps. If the app and its user experience cannot be preserved, this will create a gap in the documentation of travel tickets in our collection. The museum needs a new kind of expertise in the documentation and long-term preservation of digital environments.

In the future, artificial intelligence will influence collections work in ways that are not yet fully understood. It is already clear that artificial intelligence is useful for analysing collections and describing objects. However, an expert must review the information generated by artificial intelligence, and its use must be based on the city's guidelines on the use of artificial intelligence and on secure data management practices.

With the increasing prevalence of artificial intelligence, there is a need to redefine the authenticity of born-digital collection objects. Knowledge of provenance becomes increasingly important when faced with threats such as AI-generated forgeries that resemble historical documents. The City Museum is actively involved in adopting new tools and developing operating models for the sector in cooperation with other heritage organisations.

Helsinki lives in a world where climate change and other uncertainties are clouding the outlook. The big questions about the future of democracy and world peace are also reflected in the activities of the City Museum.

Despite these challenges, we want to boldly develop our collections and collections work so that they support the wellbeing, cultural enrichment and active citizenship of Helsinki's residents. At the museum, we believe that understanding the past helps shape the future, and our work is committed to historical integrity and good governance. International Council of Museums' (ICOM's) Code of Ethics and legislation protect the museum from potential political pressure and help support democracy and freedom of expression in Helsinki.

Challenges for the coming years:

- Collections security, risk management and protection of cultural property.
- Credible and effective development of environmental sustainability in collections work.
- Documenting born-digital archival and other materials, and verifying the authenticity of objects and information to be accessioned into collections.
- Adoption of artificial intelligence/language models for collections work and knowledge production.

Photo: Jonina Vaahtolammi



Collections experts from the museums of Central Uusimaa discussed the classification of collections in the autumn of 2025.

Regional cooperation and advice on collections work

Helsinki City Museum serves as the museum with regional responsibility for Central Uusimaa (Central Uusimaa Regional Museum). Providing advice on collections management and a wide range of expert support are part of the City Museum's collections work and mission, and the museum offers assistance and guidance to local museums and other organisations working with cultural heritage.

The City Museum also coordinates collections policy cooperation in the region, supporting the collections work of professional and local museums by organising related training, workshops and discussion events. The four-year regional work plan for 2027–2030 will establish a network of collections held by specialist museums, providing opportunities for the exchange of ideas and peer learning on collections policy and collections work.

In addition to advice and training on collections work, non-professional local museums can also receive practical support in developing their collections policies. In its work with local museums, the City Museum uses a model developed with Western Uusimaa Museum. In our role as a museum with regional responsibility, we support local museums in the region in digitising their collections and offer them the opportunity to adopt a collections management system.

Educational videos have also been produced to support their collections work, and guidelines on the management of local museums have been compiled on the open-access Wikibooks platform in cooperation with Finland's other designated regional museums.

More information about the services and the contact details of the Central Uusimaa Regional Museum are available on the Helsinki City Museum website.

2. WHAT IS IN THE COLLECTIONS?

2.1 How have the collections been formed?

Helsinki City Museum was preceded by the Antiquities Board of , which began its operations in 1906 and included the state archivist, Reinhold Hausen, the curator of the National Museum, **Karl Konrad Meinander**, and the rector of the Technical University, architect **Gustaf Nyström**. In 1907, the Board initiated a systematic photographic documentation of the capital city in collaboration with photographer **Signe Brander**. Her task was to photograph the rapidly changing urban landscape and the disappearing buildings.

When it was first established, the Antiquities Board also discussed collecting artefacts, but no steps were taken in that direction at that time. Archival material was not treated with the same degree of rigour. It was included in collections if it supplemented the visual documentation that the Antiquities Board considered its primary task. Supplementary archival material included maps, zoning plans and architectural drawings. The Board also regarded artworks such as old prints as supplementary material to the photographs. Acquisitions were recorded in the accession catalogue, from 26 September 1906 onwards. The shared accession catalogue was abandoned in 1982, and the photograph collection has since had a separate register.

The collection of artefacts began when Helsinki City Museum was established in 1911 and was given space in the basement of Villa Hakasalmi. The Antiquities Board was replaced by the Museum Committee, and **K.K. Meinander** was appointed as the museum's director. At that time, the museum acquired items for its collections such as the equipment of the town's Burgher Guard, which the town councillors had decided to preserve as early as 1787. Other early acquisitions included the contents of Senator Leo Mechelin's study, including his books, and the pharmacy collection of the Finnish Pharmaceutical Association.

For the first forty years, acquisitions were guided by the Museum Committee's standing orders, which emphasised the collection, preservation and photography of historical materials illustrating Helsinki's cultural and economic development.

As the collection grew, its management was developed under the leadership of **Arne Wilhelm Rancken**, who served as the museum curator from 1920 to 1949. He developed a classification system that divided the collection objects into their own categories. Rancken's classification system had fifty object categories, of which almost half were very detailed categories for printed materials and archival documents (IV calendars, lists; IX school programmes and lists; XII satirical magazines; XIV city plans of Helsinki and

its surroundings; XXIIII guides and prospectuses). In terms of artefacts, the system was less detailed (XXXV porcelain, glass, silver, tin, gold, etc.; XXXXI jewellery and small items, cosmetics).

Typology was central to Rancken's approach to collections management, which meant that no sub-collections or separate collections were organised by donor or photographer, for example. Helsinki City Museum's collections thus formed a single entity, with the collection objects classified into their respective categories. However, separate collections were recognised in practical collections work and in everyday speech. The Rancken system was abandoned in 1991.

The museum acquired separate collections, notably in the 1990s, when it received several substantial museum collections that had been assembled elsewhere: the collection of the Helsinki City Transport Authority (HKL) in 1993; the Osuusliike Elanto collection in 1996; the patient artwork and museum collection of Nikkilä Hospital in 1999; and the Finnish School Museum Association's collection in 2000. The original order of these collections has been preserved, and they form separate collections consisting of several object types.

The City Museum's acquisition principles have varied over time. The Museum Board, which succeeded the Museum Committee, did not actively participate in setting acquisition policy, but the influence of museum directors on the formation of collections remained strong until the 1990s, when responsibility for acquisition decisions shifted to individual units and collection curators. Collections strategies and policy documents guiding acquisitions and collections management have been prepared since the 2000s.

After the 2017 organisational reform of the City of Helsinki, the responsibility for collections and their management was transferred to the collection teams that were formed at that time. During 2026, the City of Helsinki will begin making executive decisions regarding loaned collections, donated collections, acquisitions, de-accessioning and disposal in accordance with the City of Helsinki's Administrative Regulations and the Rules of Operation for the Culture and Leisure Division.

The collections' chronological focus is from the late 19th century to the 1970s, and there is a particularly large amount of material relating to 20th-century history. Documenting the present has always played a strong role in expanding the collections, especially the photograph collection. Private donations continue to play a significant role in acquisitions, and donations are a valuable part of the dialogue between the city's residents and the museum.

The origins and contents of the collections were documented as part of the collections strategy work carried out in 2001–2002, and the resulting document is titled *Helsingin kaupunginmuseon kokoelmien historia 1906–2002* (The History of Helsinki City Museum's Collections 1906–2002). The document Kokoelmastrategia 2003 (Collections Strategy 2003) examines whose stories the City Museum's collections actually tell about Helsinki and its residents, and what these stories convey. The documents are stored in the City Museum's library.

The City Museum's collections were designated as being of national significance in 2011 at the request of the Finnish Heritage Agency, based on the criteria set out in the Hague Convention (UNESCO 1954). The Finnish Heritage Agency updated the catalogue in 2022–2023.



Photo: Constantin Grünberg

The material from the Finnish Pharmaceutical Society is among the earliest parts of the collection. It was on display in 1952, and the exhibition was similar to that of 1932, when it had been designed by the museum director, A. W. Rancken.

In 2026, Helsinki City Museum's holdings, totalling approximately one and a half million collection objects, were divided into the following collections by object type:

- Cultural history collection
  - → Archive collection
  - → Artefact collection
  - → Architectural components collection
- Archaeological collection
- Moving image collection
- Art collection
- Research data and oral history collection
- Photograph collection

As well as the following individual collections:

- Helsinki City Transport Authority collection
- Osuusliike Elanto (Co-op Elanto) collection
- Nikkilä Hospital collections
- Finnish School Museum Association collection
- Helsinki City Rescue Department's Fire Museum collection

Size of the collections in 2025	Number of objects
Cultural history collection	453 756
Photographs	1 031 524
Art	6 206
Archaeological collections	93 109

Objects listed in the electronic collections management system	Number of objects
Cultural history collection	103 567
Photographs	108 931
Art	6 144
Archaeological objects	19 656
Texts	1 398
Audio	247
Video	170

2.2 Cultural history collection

According to the definition used in Museum Statistics, the cultural history collection includes objects, archival material and architectural components. Bourgeois life is prominent in the artefact collections, with a significant number of household items associated with living in the inner city and objects related to the private sphere. There is also a large amount of clothing and interior textiles, but these mainly date from the late 19th century to the 1970s. There is little material related to agrarian Helsinki or even the culture of wealthy Helsinki manors, and what does exist is fragmentary. The longest continuities in the artefact collection are represented by products made by Helsinki's craftspeople and industry. The works of gold- and silversmiths, in particular, have been systematically documented.

To keep the collection balanced, resources for active acquisitions have long focused on contemporary phenomena. Since the 1990s, there has been a deliberate effort to document the activities of the City of Helsinki and its agencies, day-care centres and hospitals. At the same time, the volume of acquisitions has been reduced, and the geographical focus has been expanded from the inner city to the entire city of Helsinki. This narrow focus on material related to the private sphere and on urban actors has led to a bias, which is why there are virtually no household items from the 1980s or later in the collections, for example.

Helsinki's historical city plans and plot maps form the oldest part of the museum's archive collection – that is, its collection of paper-based objects. However, these, like architectural drawings, have not been systematically documented. Currently, individual maps and architectural plans are occasionally accessioned into the collections to illustrate the changing urban landscape. The collection does not include administrative material such as the minutes of the Helsinki City Museum Board, as the archives of the Museum Board are stored in the city archives.

Posters, small prints, postcards, letters, travel tickets and route maps tell the story of the city's development and activities, as well as that of the private and public lives of its residents. Currently, the corresponding material is mostly created digitally, which is why we need to establish guidelines for documenting born-digital archival material.

As exceptions, the archive collection also includes a few individual archival holdings such as the archives of the Sundman merchant family and the Helsinki Theatre Company. The museum no longer accepts archives from private persons or organisations.



Helsinki artisans have a long history in the museum's collections. A candelabrum made by goldsmith Reino Savolainen as his masterpiece was added to the collections in 2024. Savolainen worked on the gilding for a year and was awarded the title of Master Gilder in 1937.

The contents of the architectural components collection primarily consists of building components salvaged from properties built between the 1880s and the 1920s. The largest object groups by number are tile stoves, doors and wallpapers. Other larger units include windows, gates, railings, plaster decorations and floor coverings. In addition, the collection includes large individual architectural components such as the original intermediate floor structures of City Hall, along with the plaster ceiling; part of the Sompasaari pavilion; and the cast-iron columns and consoles from Rikhardinkatu Library. The collection also includes a pharmacy interior and a comprehensive miniature model collection featuring individual buildings and larger complexes.

There are only a few representative items from newer buildings from the 1930s onwards, and prefabricated construction has not yet been documented in the collection. The core collection of the architectural components collection remains undefined.

2.3 Photograph collection

The photograph collection mainly features cityscapes from the 1860s to the present day. Its main themes are changes in the urban landscape and buildings, the activities of the City of Helsinki, the daily lives of Helsinki's residents, residential life, economic activity, and events. The chronological focus is on the postwar period. Street scenes from the inner city are the best-represented subject in the collections.

The visual material produced by our own photographers focuses on changes in the urban landscape, the documentation of buildings and phenomena related to the lives of city residents. In expanding the photograph collection, we focus primarily on images of areas outside the inner city. We are also expanding our collections thematically through photography and contemporary documentation projects, as well as photo collection campaigns. Photos taken during volunteer work have played a major role since 2018.

A collection of glass negatives belonging to the Ekberg family has recently been added to the collections; it provides an insight into city life in the early 20th century. Transporting milk churns in Katajanokka in 1911.







Photo: Yehia Eweis

2.4 Art collection

From its inception, the Antiquities Board included works of art depicting Helsinki in its cultural history collections, particularly from the period before the advent of photography. These collections include a comprehensive selection of prints from the 1830s and 1840s by artists such as **F. Tengström** and **F. Liewendahl**, as well as watercolours and drawings by Magnus von Wright. The collection of old art was also expanded by commissioning copies of old works related to Helsinki from the collections of other museums. To supplement photo documentation, a series of ink drawings depicting the city's old buildings was purchased from **Rudolf Åkerblom** in 1909.

As with the photograph collection, the art collection, which comprises paintings, drawings, prints, sculptures and medals, focuses on the cityscape and its transformation. In addition, the collection includes portraits of people from Helsinki. The chronological focus of the City Museum's art collection is on the 20th century; a third of the collection dates from the 19th century, and a few works are from the 18th century

The Helsinki City Art Collection is managed by HAM Helsinki Art Museum. The City owns the collection but has deposited it with the HAM Foundation, granting the Foundation full management rights.

Shared caption: In 2024, the art collection was expanded with the portraits of merchant Johan Lindroos (1798–1862) and his wife Gustava Cecilia Meyer (1812–1899), painted by J. E. Lindh, the most popular portrait painter of the early 19th century. Johan Lindroos was once one of the most successful shipowners in Helsinki.

2.5 Archaeological collection

Our own collection of archaeological finds comprises artefacts of various ages recovered from the city area, and it has been catalogued under the museum's classification numbers. Acquisitions for this section of the collection were discontinued at the end of the 1980s, and it includes approximately 2,300 artefacts or fragments. The oldest objects date to the Stone Age, and the largest single group consists of finds from the 1930–1931 excavations of the Old Town, or Old Helsinki (1550–1640).

The finds from the archaeological excavations carried out by the museum have been catalogued since the late 1980s under the National Museum's inventory numbers, or KM numbers. The material consists almost exclusively of finds from excavations in Old Helsinki (1550–1640) and New Helsinki (1640 onwards), as well as finds recovered through official supervision of excavation work carried out as part of construction projects.

Both the museum's own collection of archaeological finds and the collection with KM numbers include several dozen sub-numbers of human remains, primarily human skeletal remains. Most of the remains come from research conducted at the Old Town Cemetery in the 1930s, but there is also material from research at the Senate Square Cemetery from 2012. The museum also has small uncatalogued human remains such as individual teeth from the osteologically analysed individuals buried at Senate Square. We are currently preserving the human skeletal material for research purposes.

The State owns the archaeological collection, but the City Museum preserves and manages it as a result of the working practices established with the former Department of Architectural History at the Finnish Heritage Agency. We have submitted a proposal to the Finnish Heritage Agency regarding depositing all the objects with the City Museum that are stored there, but no decision has yet been made on the matter. During the policy period, a core collection will be defined for the archaeological collection, with researchers from the cultural environments team responsible for this definition.



Fragments of Passglas drinking glasses have been found in archaeological excavations in Helsinki's Old Town. The reconstruction illustrates the original shape of the vessel and the glass rings that run around its sides. The find provides information about the food and drink culture of Helsinki's early urban period and its connections with European material culture.

2.6 Contemporary documentation material

The contemporary documentation material includes various textual, audio and moving-image material collected since the 1960s as part of urban ethnographic fieldwork. The share of moving images and audio recordings in the material is constantly increasing.

In the 2010s, the focus was on municipal services in accordance with the national collecting themes. In the 2020s, the focus has been on recognising the diversity of Helsinki's neighbourhoods and residents. Our exhibition activities at the museum often serve as a starting point for contemporary documentation. We have also actively participated in the contemporary documentation activities of the Network for Collections Management and Contemporary Documentation in Finland (TAKO).

2.7 Moving images

In addition to the contemporary documentation material, we have received moving images as donations from both private individuals and city organisations. The collection focuses on cinefilm materials, but it also includes other video formats.

2.8 Books and libraries

The city museum has a considerable number of books in its possession. The vast majority consists of the reference library available to our staff, not museum objects.

Our largest museum collections by number of items include the school books from the SCOLA collection, the Pharmaceutical Society's book collection and the previously mentioned library from Senator Leo Mechelin's study. In addition, the collection includes books classified as museum objects, the oldest of which date to the 18th century. All of them are stored in the collection centre. The status of the books within the museum remained unclear for a long time, and they were accessioned into the museum's collection. However, this practice has since been discontinued, and the books are now treated as working materials that are kept in the reference library. The library is managed with the Bibliografia module of the collections management system.

As a general rule, we do not accept book donations for the Cultural History Collection. The museum may either decline to accept books or printed publications offered as donations or, at its discretion, place them in the reference library.

3. HOW DO COLLECTIONS GROW AND CHANGE?

3.1 The collections are for the present and the future

We expand our collections selectively in cooperation with both local residents and various Helsinki-based organisations. When adding to the collections, we emphasise the quality of their contents. We also take the sustainability considerations set out in the 2030 Agenda into account and recognise the energy impacts of collections management and preservation.

Collections are dynamic. This means that our goal is to build collections that retain their significance and value and provide information and meaningful experiences for the people of Helsinki, both now and in the future – even as the world around us changes. We are expanding our collections with a wide variety of materials that cover various phenomena, and we also aim to identify hidden phenomena and perspectives. Active de-accessioning, however, condenses collections to their most expressive core. We remove objects from collections for reasons such as poor condition, lack of contextual information or overrepresentation.

Collection information must be accessible and understandable, and it must enable future lines of inquiry. We have the support of our partners in the sector to help us carry out high-quality collections work. The Network for Collections Management and Contemporary Documentation in Finland (TAKO) and its member museums, the Finnish Heritage Agency, various specialised museums, and other designated regional museums are important partners in both developing collection expertise and undertaking contemporary documentation projects.



Photo: Yehia Eweis.



The exhibition titled Sun bodi - kuntosalien hikinen historia (Your Body – the Sweaty History of Gyms) documented gyms. In the photo is Töölö Gym. The collection did not include workout clothes, so the gap was filled by getting the public involved through social media channels. The public was invited to suggest suitable outfits and vote on whether they should be accessioned to the collections. Photo: Yehia Eweis.

3.2 What is accessioned to the collections, and what is not?

Helsinki City Museum documents Helsinki's local cultural heritage and way of life. The objects we accession to our collections should reflect the phenomena of urban life, the activities of the city organisation, the third sector and local businesses, and Helsinki's cultural environment and the changes taking place in these domains. These objects may be tangible or intangible testimonies to history or the present, and they should convey the most multi-voiced view of Helsinki's diverse history possible.

The decision-making criteria for accession to the collections are:

- The object provides information about Helsinki's cultural heritage and urban environment. The focus is on objects that increase the collections' diversity and regional coverage.
- The object belongs to the City Museum's designated theme under the TAKO division of collecting duties.
- The object has a strong connection with Helsinki through its ownership history (provenance), story or image content, and there is no uncertainty about its ownership.
- The object complements an existing collection at the City Museum.

In addition to the content criteria, the decision is influenced by:

- The condition of the object: The condition may be good or poor, but the item is essential regarding collection content.
- The work and other costs associated with accessioning.
- What does acquiring the object require in terms of storage facilities?
- An acquisition may be justified by the opportunity to remove a comparable object that is in poorer condition and/or has weaker contextual value.

As a general rule, objects lacking contextual information or those overrepresented in the collections are not accepted. As another general rule, unsettled estate or personal property collections are not accessioned to the cultural history collection, nor are collections whose preservation, exhibition or division into smaller parts is subject to unilateral conditions.

Archives and administrative material are not included in the archive collection. Portraits of unknown individuals such as carte de visite -cards are not accessioned to the photographic collection unless they have special cultural-historical value (technically and physically unique, significantly supplementing a photographer's work, or having exceptional content). Postcards are also generally not accessioned into photographic collections.

3.3 Division of collecting duties and other collections cooperation

Cooperation with other museums and archives is part of the development of acquisitions and collections expertise. The City Museum actively participates in collaborative projects within the museum sector and maintains a dialogue with professional and non-professional museums in its area of regional responsibility, designated national museums, specialised museums in Helsinki, and the National Museum of Finland and the Finnish Heritage Agency. Through cooperation, we maintain our own collections expertise and contribute to the development of the entire museum sector.

We are a member of the Network for Collections Management and Contemporary Documentation in Finland (TAKO), which maintains and develops the national division of collecting duties among museums of cultural history, as well as cooperation on contemporary documentation. The division of collecting duties helps define the scope of our acquisitions in relation to other museums. Acquisitions made under these designated collecting themes are reported annually to TAKO using an electronic tool.

A cooperation agreement on the TAKO division of collecting duties was signed with the Finnish Heritage Agency in 2013, before TAKO was established as an association in 2024. The City Museum's designated collecting themes are:

- Public transport (Theme 2: Individuals, society and public life)
- The municipality as a service provider (Theme 2: Individuals, society and public life)
- The capital as a living environment (Theme 3: Everyday life)
- The capital as a tourist destination (Theme 5: Communications, transport and tourism)

In addition, we participate in Pool 2 (Individuals, society and public life), Pool 4 (Production, services and working life) and Pool 7 (Trends, influencers and turning points), as well as in rotating working groups.

Where necessary, we discuss any overlap in collecting responsibilities with other museums and archives, ensuring that there are no conflicts between our collections policies. In the context of the museum's projects, our working methods also involve assessing whether the material being produced would be a better fit for the collections profile of another museum or archive. The most important thing is that the public can easily find the material.

Arrangements made with the professional museums in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area:

- We have agreed with Vantaa City Museum that material related to peasant culture from the former Helsinki rural parish area will be directed to Vantaa City Museum, while material related to urban culture (including from working-class and villa areas) will be directed to Helsinki City Museum.
- We have agreed with the Hotel and Restaurant Museum that the City Museum will document the experiences of visitors, whether Helsinki residents or tourists, while the Hotel and Restaurant Museum will focus on the perspective of employees and business owners. The City Museum will therefore not expand its collection of objects related to hotels. The City Museum's picture collections do not generally document the interiors of restaurants, but only their facades.

- We have agreed with the Finnish Railway Museum that the City Museum's collection related to rail transport will be limited to commuter rail traffic, and metro and tram traffic in Helsinki.

- We hold regular discussions with the Finnish Heritage Agency/Finnish National Museum on current issues related to collections work and carrying out documentation in Helsinki.

Within the Helsinki City Group, our partners include the Information Management Unit of the City Executive Office's Administrative Division and its City Archives Team, as well as HAM Helsinki Art Museum. The City Museum has an agreement with the Information Management Unit, according to which the Information Management Unit will act as the main archive for visual and audiovisual material created after 1 June 2017. The City Museum can still accept the material in question if it fits the collections policy in effect at that time. If the material is primarily related to official records, the City Archives is responsible for its preservation.



The documenting of the working day of a bio-waste lorry driver at Helsinki Region Environmental Services (HSY) in the autumn of 2025 formed part of the 'Night' campaign organised by the Network for Collections Management and Contemporary Documentation in Finland (TAKO), as well as the documentation produced for the museum's 'Trash!' exhibition. This documentation resulted in the museum's collection gaining both photographs and artefacts such as the work jacket pictured.

TAKO collecting duties and their specifications

Public transport
Theme 2: Individuals, society and public life
→ Public sector services

- bus transport in urban areas
- metro
- tram
- commuter train
- commuting traffic
- public transport users
- customer service employees

Maintenance and technology are mainly excluded from the designated collecting themes

Overlap with the Railway Museum regarding commuter trains

The municipality as a service provider
Theme 2: Individuals, society and public life
→ Public sector services

- municipal enterprises
- health stations
- the municipality as an employer
- public-service customer interfaces

Overlap, e.g. with the everyday life pool

The capital city as a living environment
Theme 3: Everyday life
→ Housing and living

- housing and residential environments
- recreation and leisure
- business operations and workplaces
- residential construction
- neighbourhood construction
- migration
- production of social housing

Overlap with the Vantaa City Museum regarding suburban living

The boundaries of the capital city vs the metropolitan area

The capital city as a tourist destination
Theme 5: Communications, transport and tourism
→ Tourism

- the tourist experience
- domestic and foreign tourists
- sights and tourist destinations
- Helsinki Tourist Information
- tourism sector companies

Overlap and division of collecting duties with the Hotel and Restaurant Museum

3.4 Acquisition methods

The City Museum's collections grow through:

- Donations
- Contemporary documentation and other research projects; for example, those related to exhibitions
- Photo projects by volunteer photographers
- Purchases
- Transfers within the city or between museums
- Found in Collection

Donations from city residents and various city operators play a significant role in the growth of the collections. It is important to us that the city's residents want to donate their cultural heritage specifically to Helsinki City Museum. Donations are a sign of trust, and we nurture this trust by responding promptly to offers of donations and ensuring that our dialogue is respectful.

The City Museum does not accept deposits or donations that are subject to conditions. Donations transfer full ownership rights to the City Museum.

We actively expand our collections through various contemporary documentation projects, exhibitions and research initiatives, and we listen to suggestions from city residents about phenomena and materials that should be preserved.

Purchases for collections are made on an ad hoc basis, and the budget reserved for them is small.

The architectural components collection generally grows whenever property owners donate architectural components to the City Museum's collection while renovating or altering their properties. Acquisitions focus on buildings and the built environment completed in the 1930s or later because there is significantly less material from this period than from earlier periods.

The archaeological collection grows through supervision and excavations carried out by the City Museum, but the acquisitions are limited. Finds dating from the 1800s and 1900s are usually not added to the collections. If metal objects are discovered during excavations, only artefact types that fill gaps in the existing collection will be added.

3.5 Contemporary documentation

Contemporary documentation is a method by which we actively record the present for future museum visitors and research, thus creating future cultural heritage in the present moment. Documentation often focuses on a particular phenomenon: we aim to document the selected phenomenon holistically, from different perspectives and using a variety of methods.

We discuss suitable phenomena for contemporary documentation and ongoing projects at collection curators meetings, but most of the contemporary documentation at the City Museum is related to ongoing exhibition projects and the material needs identified within them. The exhibition calendar therefore significantly influences the content and schedule of contemporary documentation. Nevertheless, we also regularly collect material that complements the collections from other perspectives.

Contemporary documentation is carried out as part of the long-term documentation of urban life, but it can also be a nimble short-notice response to a rapidly changing phenomenon or to one disappearing from the urban environment.

The methods of contemporary documentation can be non-physical such as photography, recording moving images, interviews, questionnaires and online surveys, or physical such as preserving artefacts and archival materials.

The museum's internal Handbook of Contemporary Documentation (2024) provides a more detailed description of how contemporary documentation is planned, implemented and added to the collection. All materials to be accessioned to the collection are registered and described, and the digital files are added to the collections management system.

The City Museum collaborates with other museums on contemporary documentation, particularly within the framework of the pool-based work and projects organised by the Network for Collections Management and Contemporary Documentation in Finland (TAKO). In addition, we collaborate with educational institutions, especially universities, and sometimes serve as the final repository for the materials they produce. We also accept a limited amount of materials from the projects of other external partners, the rights to which are transferred to the museum. Cooperation increases the diversity and impact of collections.

The focus of contemporary documentation is on taking the diversity of Helsinki and its residents into account. Customers having their hair cut at the Next Century Fashion barbershop in 2023.



Photo: Yehia Eweis

3.6 Inclusion and participation

Our goal is to increase the opportunities for city residents to participate in documenting Helsinki's cultural heritage. Because the people of Helsinki are the best experts on their own lives, we want to make use of their expertise in documenting the present and preserving history.

We aim to achieve this by increasing opportunities for participation. Our work must be inclusive and diverse; in other words, everyone must be able to participate, regardless of their background. By participating, people can influence issues that are important to them, which increases their sense of being valued and heard.

We are actively developing ways of working that encourage local residents to get involved in working together. They should be given a say in selecting what to document and which subjects to cover, and allowed to participate in planning the documentation process. In suitable projects, they should also be involved in the actual documentation work. Large-scale contemporary documentation projects focusing on specific phenomena are often interactive, meaning the documentation is planned and carried out in cooperation with or by those familiar with the phenomenon.

In participatory research, the role of people involved as co-researchers is more central than in more traditional research. Exhibition projects, in particular, provide an opportunity to experiment with a wide range of participatory approaches, including those in which the public documents itself.

Participatory collections work engages people, but the challenge lies in getting them to commit to long-term community-based documentation work. There are many different levels of participation, and it can vary in duration or depth. The museum also facilitates low-threshold participation by allowing visitors to contribute to cataloguing information via the Finna online collections service, for example.

In 2025, we acquired a licence for the Connect to Collect online service, which allows people to donate photographs. This licence can be used in a variety of ways in collections work with both individual partners and larger groups.

As part of the Sámi in Helsinki project in 2025, we developed collaborative cataloguing practices to strengthen participation. In collaborative cataloguing, the information used to describe the content of an object being accessioned to a collection is produced in collaboration with the community or person to whom the material is related, who produced it, or who has specialist knowledge about it, either through a particular interest or otherwise. Through collaborative cataloguing, old information can take on new meanings, and existing collections can be viewed from new perspectives as new information about them is uncovered.

As a rule, participation in City Museum projects is unpaid, as is all other volunteer work. Exceptions may include ethical reasons or a very large workload. In such cases, a commission agreement is drawn up before participation begins or the work starts, specifying the work to be carried out, its scope and compensation.





Photo: Pekka Vyhtinen and Henri Tuomi

The Picture team's volunteer work is an example of the success of long-term participatory collection work. **The Photo Volunteers** (Kuvakummit) mainly carry out arrangement and preservation tasks related to physical photograph collections under the guidance of museum professionals. **The Photography Crew** (Kuvaussakki) is a group of volunteer photographers who document Helsinki and its changes according to agreed photography themes. The contribution of volunteer photographers to documenting the changing city is significant. These groups have been operating since 2018. The Photography Crew on a shooting trip in the clock tower of the Central Railway Station, and the Photo Volunteers at work in Falkman's studio.

How was participation implemented in preparing this document?

Collections policy is a professional tool, and developing it with city residents is challenging. In contrast, city residents are happy to discuss the museum's collections, which is why the museum organised two workshops over coffee. The aim was to deepen our understanding of the expectations associated with the collections.

Participants were directly invited to the workshops, and were of different ages and backgrounds. Everyone was free to work in whatever way they preferred: to brainstorm in peace and quiet, or to write down their ideas and discuss them together. The atmosphere was enthusiastic, and the museum received a wealth of written ideas and thoughts.

The topic of the first workshop was growing the collections: *What kinds of items and phenomena should be included in the museum's collection? What kind of collection should it be, and what should it tell us about?*

In particular, the discussions highlighted the importance of documenting changes in the city and its cultural environment from multiple perspectives, as well as people's everyday lives and multisensory experiences of their local environment.

The topic of the second workshop was the accessibility of collections: *How would you like to use the museum's collections? What would you like to see or explore? Where would you like to encounter the collections? How should the museum help with using the collections?*

The workshop focused on increasing knowledge about existing collections and their potential uses. Among other things, the participants hoped that the collections would be accessible in people's everyday lives – wherever they go and spend their time – as well as online.

To improve the collections' accessibility, it was proposed to convey information more effectively by adding contextual information and improving metadata. In addition, participants wished for more opportunities to influence and participate in the use of the collections, and for the collections to be exhibited in the city beyond the museum premises. Finna is great, but it is not enough.

The participants brought a wide range of perspectives to the discussions, which demonstrated the importance of organising such events as part of the work to strengthen resident participation. The interaction between people of different ages and backgrounds led to valuable exchanges, particularly between young people and older people.

To reach a diverse and multi-voiced group of participants, it would be best to engage with people where they naturally gather. Creating a confidential atmosphere requires a safe space, sufficient time and repeated encounters. To maintain confidentiality, no photographs were taken at these events.

4. HOW ARE COLLECTIONS USED?

4.1 Joy and inspiration from collections

Collections are the starting point and resource of museum work, and we use them creatively and in various ways. Our collections are on display in permanent and temporary exhibitions at the City Museum, Villa Hakasalmi, the Helsinki Tram Museum, the Workers' Museum and the Burgher's House Museum, which together receive more than 400,000 museum visitors annually. The buildings themselves are, in part, authentic cultural heritage.

Well-documented and preserved collections make it possible to tell interesting stories and provide audiences with meaningful experiences and information. The 'handling collection' category in the collection classification system makes it possible to identify objects that museum visitors can examine at close range. Where appropriate, the public is also given the opportunity to participate in selecting objects for exhibition and in gathering information related to them.

Users can experience and interact with the collections at exhibitions and events, and explore them independently online, in the museum's research room and at the collections centre. Every person who needs these collections – whether for their own personal interest or to support their work – is a collections customer. We share information about our collections with the city's residents and within the museum. The collections are also used in designing museum gift shop products.

We are constantly developing the accessibility of our collections. Digital accessibility for the photographic collection is already well underway, and development is continuing across all parts of the collection. Open data enables the sharing and use of digitised collections for the needs of city residents.



Photo: Henri Tuomi

Customers most often encounter the collections in exhibitions.
The new Helsinki exhibition was being built in the spring of 2026.

4.2 Collections customer service

The significance of collections arises from interaction with users. Our goal is for the City Museum's collections to be used in diverse ways both within the museum and outside it, in accordance with the principle of active collections, and to serve and provide enjoyment for as many users as possible.

Good customer service is an integral part of the City Museum's collections work. Collections are significant when they are accessible, and the information they contain is used both within the City Museum and beyond it. The museum is committed to promoting the mobility of collections and, among other things, lends materials for exhibitions at other museums.

We serve online users by making our collections available primarily through the Finna service on the museum's dedicated page. As part of customer service, the usage rights are clearly stated for each object, and most have been published under terms that allow free use. However, only a small part of the collections can be browsed on Finna, so customers are also welcome to explore the materials in the museum.

The City Museum's picture collection is a public collection that is open to the public. You can explore the picture collections by requesting the materials and arranging a visit in advance.

In-person customer service for the cultural history collection is provided at the collections centre, but, where possible, materials can be transferred to the research room at the Aleksanterinkatu location for research. The extent and availability of customer service are affected by any special characteristics of the material being examined, such as its size and condition, which must be determined before a customer visit. Collection curators answer questions about the collections and help prepare for customer visits. The digitisation of collections and high-quality cataloguing play an important role in improving accessibility.

We will provide publishable images from the City Museum's materials in accordance with the current price list if the image is not available on Finna. You can also order physical prints from the picture collections.

Unpublished contemporary documentation materials in the collections management system can be explored by appointment in the research room at the Aleksanterinkatu location after obtaining a research permit. A researcher who has obtained a research permit may take digital copies of materials with them and retain them for the duration of their research. By separate agreement, the materials may also be sent as digital files to researchers who have obtained a research permit.

The city museum's image price list.

The City Museum in the Finna service.

Picture Browsery – Helsinki City Museum.



Photo: Jussi Hellsten

You can independently browse photographs in the Picture Browsery, which is a customer service area for the picture collections. There, customers can access the museum's Finna service and browse a varying selection of prints.

4.3 Internal use

We want the collections to be a source of joy and inspiration for all museum employees, and we recognise that perspectives on the collections vary depending on one's role. All museum staff can obtain MuseumPlus user IDs by requesting them from the system administrator. We ensure that the collections management system and the information recorded in it are available to all museum staff, and we provide them with regular training in using the system. In addition, we monitor and develop internal service and ordering procedures; maintain an understanding of the objectives, methods and challenges of the various professional groups and teams within the museum; and actively communicate about these matters.

We foster interaction among exhibition teams, other museum staff and the collections. Each exhibition team considers which approach is most suitable for its particular needs.

4.4 Museum education

The goal of museum education is to help museum visitors from increasingly diverse backgrounds understand the history of Helsinki and the city's cultural heritage through collections. Authentic objects, images, documents, art and moving images are evidence of the past, but they may not be understood without expert assistance. This is where museum education methods such as role play, themed and other guided tours, time travel, and hands-on learning are useful.

Customers have a wide range of needs. Senior citizens and immigrants who are integrating into society require different approaches from those used with school groups, but what all museum visitors have in common is the need for the topic at hand to be presented in ways that are specifically suited to them. Historical phenomena are examined holistically, with both tangible objects and images, as well as traditions and language, providing insights into the past and culture of Helsinki and its residents.

In addition to the museum collection, we use museum education materials such as objects de-accessioned from the collection, replicas of original objects, props and objects we have made ourselves. Museum education materials are not part of the museum collection but have been acquired for public use in museum work, guided tours, exhibitions and events.

4.5 Making collections available online

The Helsinki City Museum has more than twenty years of experience of making its collections publicly available on the internet. We joined the Finnish Museums Online project in 2005, and we have been making digitised collection materials and other data resources available since 2014 through the Finna search service maintained by the National Library. The high-quality online access to collections has significantly reduced the number of physical visits by customers.

For a long time, the main focus of making collections publicly available was on photographs, but a wealth of material is also available from archive, artefact and art collections today. Alongside digitised objects and the associated metadata, data related to the cultural environment forms a key part of the data repository published on Finna. We began making architectural data available in 2023, and data on inventoried archaeological sites in early 2026. Narrow-gauge film material, along with its metadata, was published experimentally in 2025.

Making collections available online is closely linked to the cataloguing and digitisation of materials. The picture collections have a long-term digitisation plan inherited from previous collections policy periods and the annual digitisation programme. Digitisation and cataloguing projects have played a more sporadic role in making other collections available online. The table below shows the share of collection objects for each collection component made available via Finna.

In 2025, the following have been made available on the Finna service:

5 % Cultural history collection

8 % Photographs

39 % Art

Finna is an interactive platform, and it provides us with the majority of the customer feedback we receive regarding our collections, as well as suggestions for refining our catalogue records. The City Museum's Finna page regularly features new collection highlights related to digitisation and research projects and other current themes. In addition, our aim is to publish the collection items on display in our exhibitions on Finna.

We promote the research use of contemporary documentation materials and aim to make their metadata available on Finna in 2026–2030. The materials themselves are published on a case-by-case basis, subject to data protection restrictions. In addition, we are assessing the suitability of Finna's *A Shortcut to Research* site for presenting this information.

We have produced several resource packages for Finna's *Luokkahuone* (Classroom) site, which are designed to meet the needs of basic education and take the national curriculum into account.

The City Museum generally publishes all the material it makes available as open data, either under a CC-BY 4.0 licence, when copyright is in effect, or with a Public Domain designation, when the copyright protection period for the material has expired. The works protected by copyright in the archive and art collections are published in accordance with an agreement between the City of Helsinki and Kuvasto ry. A small part of the materials in the art collection has been published under the CC BY-NC 4.0 licence, which excludes commercial use.

Helsinki City Museum is involved in the Europeana service, a joint European project that publishes roughly the same materials as in the Finna service.

The City Museum in the Europeana service

Finna Shortcut to research content

City Museum content in Finna Classroom

5. SUSTAINABLE AND IMPACTFUL MUSEUM COLLECTIONS

5.1 Sustainable museum collections

The City Museum takes its responsibility to combat climate change and the loss of biodiversity seriously, in line with the City of Helsinki's objectives. The aim of sustainability efforts involving collections is both to preserve the collections and to promote their sustainable use. Sustainable use means supporting the cultural and social sustainability of society by taking the diversity of Helsinki residents into account and enabling their participation in expanding the collections. Diversity, inclusion and participation are discussed in Chapter 3 above.

Our goal is collections that are managed cost-effectively, and whose carbon footprint is as small as possible in terms of management, preservation, logistics and accessibility. We use renewable materials in collections work whenever possible.

In our collections work, we consider how the collections and the information they contain can be used to build a sustainable future. All preservation consumes a lot of energy and materials, so we actively restrict the growth of our collections and their storage spaces. Good collections management saves time and costs, and is therefore also sustainable from an economic perspective

We consider sustainability and lifecycle thinking when adding to our collections. We must accept that some collection object materials will deteriorate over time, which is why there is a specific de-accessioning policy for such objects. Our goal is not for the collection to grow but for the balance of accessions to de-accessions to result in a smaller more streamlined collection.

The City Museum holds an EcoCompass certificate and is committed to the environmental programme it entails. Collection centres are not covered by the certificate, but the joint collection centre is supported by a pair of eco-support staff from the HAM Helsinki Art Museum and the City Museum, who work to promote these practices with others operating in the same premises.

The objectives of the environmental programme related to the collections include taking environmental considerations into account when procuring materials and exhibition supplies; reusing conservation and packaging materials; managing and using exhibition supplies and props efficiently; and reusing surplus materials or donating them to appropriate organisations for recycling.

Materials are procured based on durability and quality, and they are reused and recycled for as long as possible. Storage, spaces and the use of materials have also been carefully considered. For example, packaging textiles and work gloves are maintained by washing them. Waste management practices and the energy efficiency of lighting have also been improved.

The centralised storage of collections in a shared collection centre and the K3 collection centre saves resources, as centralisation reduces the need for transport. Transport is carefully planned, and trips are consolidated on designated days.

How well the exhibition structures work and materials are recycled is monitored as part of the museum's concept monitoring.

International exhibition loans have a large energy footprint. However, the City Museum's loan scheme focuses on Finland and supports the national division of collecting duties, meaning there is no need to keep multiple versions of the same object; instead, the collections circulate between museums.

Storing collections in climate-controlled facilities is energy-intensive. We must accept that it is impossible to preserve and display the entire collection under completely optimal conditions. However, the museum always strives to achieve the best possible outcome, with the priority being the long-term preservation of the museum objects. This is also taken into account in collection loans.

Museum operations are located in rental properties, whose energy solutions such as methods of electricity generation we cannot influence. Electronic systems and artificial intelligence consume a lot of energy, and it is currently expected that the museum's energy consumption will also increase.

5.2 Collections and research

Our collections work is based on research-based knowledge, and we take a research-oriented approach. This is essential because our acquisitions expand and define what will constitute the cultural heritage of the future. We use methods commonly employed in cultural research to document the present. In turn, the preservation of collections draws on knowledge of the natural sciences and material analysis. We share research-based information about our collections with the public through exhibitions, publications and a wide range of public events.

We want to promote the ideals of open science, critical thinking and a spirit of inquiry.

Research-based knowledge and research use enhance the value and impact of the collections as both museum and cultural heritage resources. Collections should provide opportunities for individuals and communities to interpret history in different ways, both now and in the future. The starting point is high-quality cataloguing that records the context of an object, its meaning at the time of documentation and the stories associated with it.

Retrospective cataloguing is one way of enhancing the information content of collections. Community-based examination and collaborative cataloguing of collections are useful tools in this regard. Through co-research, we can both add new knowledge to the collections and reframe existing knowledge in new ways. In turn, the development of accessible cataloguing makes collection information available to new users. It is essential to incorporate the information generated by exhibition projects into the museum history of the objects. Collection classification (see more details in Section 6.8) and collection inventory are part of our research approach.

We are part of a research community and partners in research projects. In our cooperation with universities and other higher education institutions, our role is often to document and catalogue.

During the policy period, we will participate in the preparation and implementation of a national research policy programme as part of our duties as a museum with regional responsibility. As part of the project, we are drawing up our own research policy programme, which will help us clarify our role as a research organisation.

One of the key objectives is to promote the research use of existing collections. We are continuously making contemporary documentation materials available on Finna in accordance with data protection regulations (see Section 4.4. for further details). Some of the materials are only available for use on the museum's premises, but digital files may be accessed outside the museum by separate arrangement.

In its research projects and the publication of materials, the City Museum complies with laws and regulations, as well as good research ethics practices, and requires the same of its customers.

Where a customer requires access to the museum's collection materials for research or for a thesis, they must hold a collection access permit issued by the manager of the Cultural Heritage Unit at the City Museum. The forms related to contemporary documentation and the research use of collections have been updated to comply with the General Data Protection Regulation in 2024.

If the research or thesis collects or processes information about museum customers or staff, the Deputy Director of Culture grants the research permit. The permit can be applied for using an electronic form.

The City Museum does not serve as a publisher for external publishing projects.

Research related to the Culture and Leisure Division | City of Helsinki

Photo: Henri Tuomi



Collection research is conducted in various ways within the framework of the museum's operational plan. Careful research and material analysis shed light on an object's cultural and historical background, allowing its versatile use in the museum's exhibitions and on the Finna.fi search service. Up-to-date measurement and condition data with contextual information forms the basis of a qualitative assessment of the collection and any de-accession decisions. Curator Ella Liljeroos measuring an object to be added to the collections.

5.3 Communications

Widely known collections contribute to the City Museum's impact. Our collections include unique objects and ensembles that are only found here, so it is worth displaying them for the public. Our collections are building blocks of Helsinki's identity, but their prominence and diverse uses also help us justify the existence of the museum collections and their costs to city residents.

We therefore communicate about our collections and collections work in various ways: through expert lectures, blogs and publications, and as part of the museum's event production. We use and develop the museum's communications channels to communicate about the collections in cooperation with the division's communications and marketing teams. We also encourage our experts to participate in various forums.

Our aim is to use social media in various ways to raise the profile of our collections work and for acquisitions. Museum visitors and other city residents independently share information about phenomena and museum objects that interest them on social media, and the City Museum wants to encourage and support them in doing so. For example, several online communities actively share images from the city museum's picture collections.

Signe Brander's photographs are the best-known part of the collection among Helsinki residents, and new research-based exhibitions and publications are constantly being produced. Market Square in 1909.



Photo: Signe Brander

5.4 Measuring collections work

We measure the fulfilment of our collections mission using quantitative indicators, which are reported in the national Museum Statistics and the annual report. The figures reported to Museums Statistics are used as the basis for this annual report. In the financial statements of the Culture and Leisure Division, two key figures from the museum were monitored in 2025:

- Physical visits: 448,154 visitors
- Digital visitors: 113 300 visitors[2]

The museum's public-facing products are largely based on its collections, so both indicators also indirectly measure the impact of its collections work. Digital visits measure the results of the work to make the collections available, in which all staff members engaged in collections work participated at different stages of the process.

From 2024 onwards, we will monitor the extent to which diversity is achieved in acquisitions as part of monitoring progress towards the diversity objective entailed in the museum concept.

We report annually to TAKO on acquisitions made in accordance with the national division of collecting duties.

Every two years, the National Library produces a visitor report based on the Finna service, which provides us with information about the service's users. Based on the analysis in the report and the measures derived from it, we are addressing the following objective in the museum concept regarding expertise: *The museum constantly develops its expert services.*

The number of artworks and graphic archive materials made available on Finna is reported annually for each artist to Kuvasto ry in accordance with the *Art Collections Online 2.0* agreement.

5.5 Economic impacts of collections work

The value or return on cultural history museum collections is neither reported nor calculated in monetary terms.

In 2025, salaries accounted for 43% of the City Museum's operating expenses (44% in 2019), and property costs accounted for 31% (33% in 2019), which is consistent with the general cost structure of Finnish museums, as, according to Museum Statistics, salary expenses accounted for 42.6%, and property costs for 34.6%, in 2024.

The costs of collections work also consist primarily of salaries and rents. In 2025, the rent for the two collection centres accounted for 36% of the museum's total rental expenses. In terms of square metres, they cover approximately 52% of the museum's total space.

It is impossible to separate personnel expenses for collections work from the salary expenses of the entire museum because all those involved in collections work also participate in customer service and exhibition work.

The income from collections work is small and quite sporadic. The sale of image files and prints, as well as collection loans, generates several thousand euros annually, the amount varying depending on the number of loan requests.

Collections teams contribute to improving the museum's productivity by focusing efforts on collections management and collections logistics. The goal is to improve customer service and the accessibility of collections, and to enable a faster exhibition cycle.

2 The figure only includes users of the Helsinkikuvia.fi service. The service was discontinued in 2025, and visitors to the Finna service will be monitored in the future.

6. HOW COLLECTIONS WORK IS CARRIED OUT

6.1 Collections organisation and decision-making

The City Museum is one of the Culture and Leisure Division's cultural services. Our museum has two units: the Cultural Heritage Unit; and the Public Services Unit. The Cultural Heritage Unit is responsible for the city's cultural history collection, collections management and collections policy, and the collections management system and collections logistics. Responsibility for the collections lies with the manager of the Cultural Heritage Unit and the chief curators.

The collections teams are responsible for and prepare proposals concerning accessions, de-accessions and disposals in the cultural history collection, as well as collection loans. The museum director decides annually which acquisition batches are accessioned to the collection. Decisions on donations, purchases, de-accessions and loans are made by the Museum Director, the Deputy Director of Culture or the Executive Director of the Culture and Leisure Division based on proposals from the collections teams and within their respective procurement thresholds.

The Cultural Heritage Unit has two collections teams: the Artefact Collections Team; and the Picture Collections Team. The Artefact team is responsible for the cultural history collection, that is, the artefact and archive collections, as well as related research, customer service and logistics. The Artefact team is also responsible for the collection centres and their collections management and logistics. In addition, it is responsible for the architectural components collection, for which the Cultural Environment team provides expertise. The archaeological artefacts are the responsibility of the archaeologists in the Cultural Environment team.

Photo: Henri Tuomi



To mark HSY's anniversary in 2026, a new manhole cover was commissioned, which was added to the collection as part of the history of Helsinki's drinking water. Conservator Sanna Niemi-Pynttäri cleans the cover for storage.

The Picture team is responsible for the photograph and art collections. The Chief Curator of the Picture team is the product owner of the collections management system.

Collections work is carried out under many different job titles and in several teams. In 2026, collections work was carried out under the following job titles (in alphabetical order): archaeologist, building restoration expert, chief curator, curator, conservator, head of research, media assistant, museum assistant, museum technician, and photographer.

Temporary employees are employed within the limits permitted by the performance budget. We offer internships to students in the field as opportunities arise. We also procure conservation services from external providers to support our own operations.

New hires are assessed holistically from the perspective of the skills required for collections management, the development of collections work and customer service. By 2030, there are expected to be several retirements. Partly for this reason, collections work practices are being developed with a view to transferring collections expertise and collection-related knowledge.



Photo: Henri Tuomi

Appropriate storage solutions are an important part of preventive conservation.
Conservator Sanna Niemi-Pynttäri stands beside a storage box for metal jewellery.

6.2 Collections processes

The different areas of collections management are described as processes that also serve as guidelines for collections work. The responsibility for updating these processes lies with the process owners, i.e. the chief curators of the collections teams, who are responsible for updating the links in Teams. The processes related to collections management are:

- Process for archaeological artefacts
- Process for preventive conservation
- Process for accessioning an object to the cultural history collection
- Process for documentation photography
- Quarantine process
- Library collection process
- Collections logistics process
- Process for digitisation at the picture lab
- Loan process
- Handbook of Contemporary Documentation
- Exhibition conservation process
- Exhibition manual
- De-accessioning process
- Process for architectural components
- Process for artworks
- Artwork photography workflow
- Process for the acquisition of photographs

6.3 Collections work is guided by laws, regulations and other documents

The City Museum is one of the services provided by the City of Helsinki's Culture and Leisure Division. The division's rules of operation state that the City Museum is responsible for the City of Helsinki's cultural history collection, collections management and collections policy, and the collections management system and collections logistics.

The following laws, regulations, agreements, and other documents and guidelines govern the City Museum's collections work:

Museums Act 314/2019

Antiquities Act | 295/1963 (in Finnish)

Copyright Act | 404/1961

Act amending the Copyright Act | 263/2023 (in Finnish)

EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) – Your Europe

Administrative Regulations of the City of Helsinki (in Finnish)

Culture and Leisure Division Rules of Operation (in Finnish)

A Helsinki we can be proud of City Strategy 2025–2029

Agenda 2030

Ethical rules for museum work Museum ethics – ICOM Finland

Mahdollisuuksien museo (The museum of opportunities). The Museum Policy Programme 2030 of the Ministry of Education and Culture

Government resolution on the cultural heritage strategy for 2023–2030

New provisions of the Copyright Act concerning cultural heritage institutions: Guidance on the application of the KAM Legal Group for Libraries, Archives and Museums guidelines (in Finnish)

Data protection in the KAM (GLAM) sector (in Finnish)

In addition

Agreement on the national division of collecting duties

Four-year plan for Central Uusimaa Regional Museum

Let's tell the stories of Helsinki together! The concept of Helsinki City Museum 2022–2027

6.4 Collections management system

The City Museum's collections management is based on a collections management system, both in terms of content and collections logistics.

We updated our collections management system as planned with HAM Helsinki Art Museum during the 2020–2024 collections policy period. The Maria/MediaKsi system, which we had used since 1998, was replaced by Zetcom's browser-based MuseumPlus collections management system. The system was commissioned by the Development and Digitalisation Services of the City of Helsinki's Culture and Leisure Division, and the software, server space and maintenance are acquired as SaaS (Software as a Service). At the City Museum, the system's product owner is the Chief Curator of the Picture team, while the project group is responsible for operational instructions, development and maintenance. Helsinki City Museum participates in the development of the system with the service provider and other organisations using MuseumPlus.

The benefits achieved through the transition are considerable: the previously separate collection-specific databases and the collections management tasks that could only be partly managed using MediaKSI have been replaced by modular software that enables the consistent management of all key collections processes. In addition, the current system supports the international Spectrum standard.

The quality of metadata has been improved with the shared term lists in MuseumPlus and the use of the integrated KOKO ontology. The system also guides the recording of data in a structured, cumulative and standardised manner.

In addition to information related to collection objects and actors, we can use the MuseumPlus system to manage collections processes (acquisitions, exhibitions, collection loans and de-accessions, conservation, and logistics), and to store data resources related to the built cultural environment. MuseumPlus has also replaced the City Museum's PrettyLib system for managing its reference library collection.

Our goal is to transfer digital collection data to the national long-term preservation service (PAS).

Collections management system and activities as a museum with regional responsibility

As the museum with regional responsibility for Central Uusimaa, the City Museum promotes the museum activities of local museums in its region. One part of the duties of the Regional Museum is to provide a collections management system for museums in the region that do not receive state subsidies. An agreement on its implementation will be drawn up between Helsinki City Museum and local museums.

A condition of this agreement is that the local museum has a permanent collection managed in accordance with the ethical rules of the museum sector, and that the owner of the collection is an entity with legal capacity. The agreement enables the local museum to enter into an agreement with the National Library to make their collection available on Finna. The City Museum provides the local museum with an introduction to the system, cataloguing guidelines and training.

6.5 Collections and data protection

Data protection is of paramount importance to us, particularly when it comes to donations of material. We take this into account both when adding material to our collections and when publishing information about the collections. As part of the donation process, we always agree on the use of the donor's personal data and/or any personal data relating to the material.

In contemporary documentation, we inform our informants about data protection issues and the use of the material, and, where necessary, we also agree on the storage of personal data in the museum's information system.

Before publishing the survey data, we carry out a risk assessment and withhold some of the data from publication for data protection reasons. In processing, we take special categories of personal data and any restrictions on their use into account.

Personal data related to the collections are processed in accordance with the privacy policy for the collection management data file of Helsinki City Museum and the HAM Helsinki Art Museum Foundation. The basis for the processing of personal data is Article 6(1) (c) and (e) of the EU General Data Protection Regulation (2016/679). The persons responsible for the register are the Museum Director and the Director of HAM Helsinki Art Museum. The contact person at Helsinki City Museum is the Chief Curator of the Picture team.

6.6 Accessioning to the collections

Regardless of the method of acquisition, the suitability of objects available for accession to the collections is always assessed in relation to the existing collection and the current collections policy. When making an accession decision, we also consider the resources required for accessioning, preservation and any future display, as well as factors related to collection security.

Our aim is not simply to expand our collections, we strive for a controlled accessioning based on specific phenomena, which enhances their representativeness and significance. As a rule, we do not accept everything that is offered to us.

Material offers are primarily directed to the collection teams through the form on the website. Proposals for accession into the collections are made collegially at meetings of the Artefact or Picture teams, with the appointed collection curator responsible for presenting the proposals. All professional groups within the teams are involved in justifying the proposal. The decision-making process concerning accessioning and deaccessioning in the cultural history collection, as well as collection loans, will be updated in 2026 to comply with the Culture and Leisure Division's administrative regulations and rules of operation.

In preparation for the team presentation, the collections researcher assesses the suitability of the material in advance and identifies any similar items in the collections. In addition, they will investigate the history and context of the offered materials, their ownership and any copyright issues with the person offering the materials, and inform them of the terms of transfer. In turn, the conservator assesses the physical condition of the offered material.

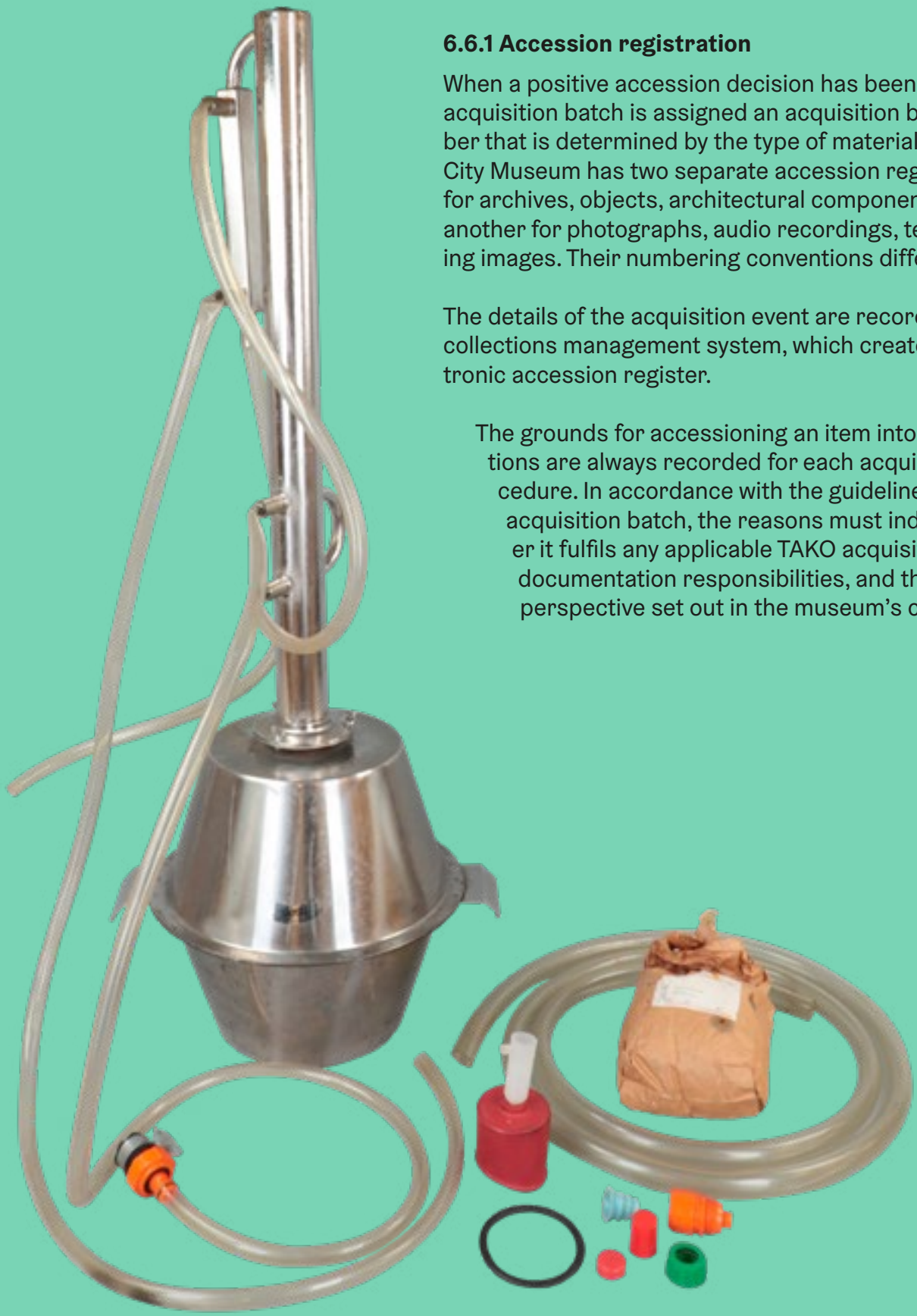
For both collection transfers and donations, a Gift Deed/Agreement is drawn up covering the transfer and use of the material, as well as the use of the donor's personal data and/or any personal data related to the material. The document signed by both parties is digitised and imported into the Agreements module of the MuseumPlus collections management system.

6.6.1 Accession registration

When a positive accession decision has been made, the acquisition batch is assigned an acquisition batch number that is determined by the type of material. Helsinki City Museum has two separate accession registers, one for archives, objects, architectural components and art, another for photographs, audio recordings, text and moving images. Their numbering conventions differ.

The details of the acquisition event are recorded in the collections management system, which creates an electronic accession register.

The grounds for accessioning an item into the collections are always recorded for each acquisition procedure. In accordance with the guidelines, for each acquisition batch, the reasons must indicate whether it fulfils any applicable TAKO acquisition and documentation responsibilities, and the diversity perspective set out in the museum's concept.



Good contextual information justifies the accessioning of an object to the collections. A group of friends from Kallio acquired a photo of a moonshine still in the early 1970s. At that time, home-distilling equipment was openly advertised and sold, and distilling moonshine at home was even more common in cities than in rural areas. The demand for distillation equipment is believed to have peaked in Finland during the Alko strike in the spring of 1972.

6.6.2 Cataloguing

Cataloguing refers to the production and recording of essential information about a museum object in a structured and searchable format in a collections management system. Alongside our collection curators, archaeologists, conservators, media assistants, museum assistants and museum technicians participate in cataloguing.

In 2025, we carried out our first trials of community-based collaborative cataloguing based on shared expertise, in which external stakeholders participated in cataloguing alongside museum staff. Related instructions and process descriptions will be prepared in 2027.

There are different levels of cataloguing. At its simplest, what is known as basic or descriptive cataloguing is the act of naming an object, describing its physical dimensions and appearance, or recording information about its location.

The term 'research cataloguing' refers to the processes of dating, subject indexing and recording contextual information about an object. In addition to the information obtained at the time of transfer, various source materials are used in cataloguing, and their critical evaluation is part of research cataloguing.

The customer feedback received via Finna has played a significant role in refining our cataloguing data, but the information obtained through this channel should be treated with the same critical approach to sources as any other information.

The story behind an object is an integral part of its value for research and as a museum object, and it is linked to the object during the cataloguing process.

For decades, we have strived to achieve a level of detail and accuracy in our cataloguing that extends to individual objects. This has proved too labour-intensive, particularly in the case of large sets of archival and photographic material. During the last policy period, we developed practices for hierarchical cataloguing. The MuseumPlus collections management system enables larger bodies of material – collections and series – to be described and presented hierarchically. Finna also supports the hierarchical presentation of materials.

Archaeological finds are listed in the collections management system with KM numbers. Browsing rights are granted on request to representatives of other museum organisations.

6.7 Inventory

An inventory is a method we use to manage collections in terms of both quantity and content. Inventory collections are either thematic or typological, and are determined based on the needs of collections or exhibition work. The information gathered during inventory process is primarily recorded in the collections management system. Inventory is carried out by conservators, museum assistants, media assistants, museum technicians and curators.

Inventory work improves the quality of our collections. Its objectives and results are:

- Inventory control, i.e. bringing unregistered and/or unnumbered objects within the scope of collections management, basic details, identification photographs and locations
- Improving knowledge of the collections
- Identifying missing phenomena
- The ability to set acquisition targets and identify objects for de-accession once an overall picture of the inventoried area has emerged. An inventory leads to the collection becoming more streamlined and its quality improving.
- Condition survey
- Ensuring the preservation of collections in accordance with the principles of preventive conservation.
- Locating materials for exhibition purposes and providing a wider variety of exhibition objects
- Improving the quality of collection information
- Making more material available in the Finna search service

Examples of inventories carried out in the cultural history collection during the previous collection policy period include the inventory of patient artwork from the Nikkilä Hospital Museum, the inventory and photographic documentation of Hilbert's decorative painting sketches, condition surveys of underwear, men's accessories and spectacles, and the inventory of 1980s material for an exhibition.

In inventorying the archive collection, we prioritise material that will be published in the Finna service. Our archives still contain a large amount of unlisted material, only part of which has been recorded in the accession register. A crucial step forward in the inventory control of architectural components was the relocation inventory carried out in 2006, followed by inventories of wallpaper samples and doors. For the most part, the art collection has been catalogued, and inventory work has been carried out on a project basis.

The inventory of our photograph collection is linked to the digitisation plan and the annual digitisation programme. We conduct inventories in connection with exhibitions, publications and research projects. In addition, we carry out inventorying when considering whether to accept photographs offered to the collection. We are also inventorying our moving-image collection based on the same principle. During the previous collection policy period, inventories were related to research and publication projects, particularly those related to photographers **Ivan Timiriasev** and **Volker von Bonin**, as well as projects related to colour photographs.

We are also inventorying, researching and digitising the photograph collection in the archive. The long-term aim is to transfer all original prints from the collection currently available to customers to a long-term storage archive that is not accessible to customers. A group of volunteers from the Picture team is also carrying out inventory-related tasks under supervision. The packaging materials for the original prints are being updated.





Contact prints have been used to inventory the extensive collection of photographs held by the local newspaper MaTaPuPu (Malmi-Tapanila-Pukinmäki-Puistola). On the right is Kyllikki Sjölund's flower and candy kiosk, which, according to the MaTaPuPu newspaper, had become a landmark in Puistola. The inventory improves the management of this part of the collection and makes it possible to highlight locally significant topics as part of the city's story.

6.8 Collection classification and de-accessioning

A collection classification system is in use for the artefact and archive collections. Classification is automatically applied to new acquisitions, which are always classified when they are accessioned to the collections as part of the cataloguing process.

Collection classification is a method of collections management and inventory control that enables us to assess an individual object or group of objects against specific criteria, including its value to the museum, its suitability for the collection profile and its relationship to the rest of the museum's collection. Collection classification is used to refine the collection profile, improve collection quality and reduce the number of items in them. The collection classification assigned to a collection item governs its management, use and preservation. The collection classification recorded in the collections management system highlights the object's value as part of Helsinki City Museum's collections.

Beyond its significance for collection security, the classification system has financial implications, as it can influence the costs of maintaining and housing the collections. Collection classification is also important in exhibitions, as it allows screening for objects from the collections that require less stringent protection. Occasionally, the classification process reveals objects that exhibition visitors are allowed to touch.

There are three types of collections: the core collection; the basic collection; and the handling collection. Collection classification is dynamic, which means that the collection class defined for an object is not final but can be reassessed. Collection classification is based on the Collection Classifier checklist. It is a set of criteria or attributes that should be used to examine the object being classified in each instance. The rationale for classifying objects as part of the core collection is recorded in the collections management system.

We have not introduced a classification system for the photography, art and architectural components collections.

Items are de-accessioned from all parts of the collection during inventory and cataloguing. The City Museum's principles governing the de-accessioning of objects from its collections were adopted in 2001 and updated in 2015. The de-accessioning process, which governs the decision-making and implementation of de-accessions, was updated in 2019. From 2024 onwards, the entire process of de-accessioning will be documented in the collections management system, from the de-accession proposal to the decision, and will no longer be recorded in the de-accession register. Records of de-accessioned objects are retained in the collections management system even if the object is physically disposed of.

An active de-accessioning policy based on collection inventories is an important tool for developing collections and their management, and an established part of the City Museum's collections work. Systematic de-accessioning should halt the growth of the cultural history collection in particular or at least slow it significantly, streamline the collections, and focus the resources of collections work on the parts of the collections with the greatest value to the museum. De-accessions and disposals may have both financial and security-related objectives, and reducing collections is also a sustainability goal.

Collection categories of the cultural history collection

The core collection is defined by the guidelines of the current collections policy, the collections themselves and the content of each object. The core collection comprises the objects of the greatest significance to the museum, which Helsinki City Museum can use to present its collections mission concisely if it wishes. Object-specific requirements for the ambient conditions are the starting point for displaying the core collection. Efforts are also made to ensure the preservation of the core collection, even in exceptional circumstances.

The basic collection is that part of the collection that has not been defined as belonging to either the core collection or the handling collection. The majority of the collections are included in the basic collection.

The handling collection refers to objects that are not the best examples of their object group or subject area in terms of collection value or condition. The purpose of the handling collection is to bring the collections closer to museum visitors and enhance the experiential aspect of exhibitions. They may become worn through use in exhibitions and for museological purposes. The degree of use is always determined on a case-by-case basis. Assigning an object to the handling collection means that it will be de-accessioned once it is worn out.

What kind of objects are suitable for the handling collection?

- There are many objects in the collection that are very similar to it.
- The object is replaceable, meaning that another example can easily be obtained.
- The condition of the object allows its use in the handling collection.
- There is no significant contextual information associated with the object.

6.9 Collections care and physical management

The City Museum cares for its collections responsibly and in accordance with the principles of preventive conservation. We aim to create favourable conditions for the objects and to protect them from pests, mishandling and other damage. Collections care includes preventive and remedial conservation, as well as exhibition and storage. Appropriate conditions in both exhibition and storage areas are essential for the condition and preservation of the objects.

The City Museum has two collection centres: the joint collection centre of the City Museum; and the HAM Helsinki Art Museum in Turvalaakso, Vantaa, which was established in 2017 (6,153 m^2), and the complementary collection centre K3 (1,800 m^2), of which 200 m^2 is allocated to HAM. In addition to the collection storage facilities, the joint collection centre of HAM and the City Museum includes conservation facilities, a workshop for museum technicians and a photography studio. Storage and maintenance services for buses and motor vehicles are purchased from the Automobile and Road Museum Mobilia's collection hotel. Photograph collections are primarily stored in the negatives and prints archive at the Aleksanterinkatu 16 office.

6.9.1 Conservation

A conservator is an expert in conservation who is responsible for the preservation, care and conservation of cultural heritage. At the City Museum, this is the responsibility of the collection centre conservator and, depending on the material, conservators specialising in artefacts, furniture, paper and textiles.

The purpose of preventive conservation is to prevent damage to collection objects and prolong their lifespan. The indirect preservation measures of preventive conservation do not alter the object or its structure. The goal is to prevent the need for remedial conservation.

Conservators are responsible for developing and providing guidance on the principles of preventive conservation, but the practical implementation and compliance with these guidelines is the responsibility of all personnel. The goal is for every employee to be aware of the importance of collections security in their own work tasks. Training sessions are organised for new employees to familiarise them with the basics of preventive conservation. The training equips participants to work with and handle objects accordingly.

Remedial conservation means halting or repairing damage to an object. The aim of remedial conservation is to conserve damaged objects using the least invasive measures possible that are primarily intended to preserve them. Exhibition conservation takes priority in remedial conservation.

Conservators also survey the condition of objects in new acquisition batches and conserve them if necessary. The museum does not have a separate photograph conservator, but we consult a paper conservator as required, especially for preventive conservation of photographs.

The conservation of archaeological finds is carried out as an outsourced service, and conservation work for exhibitions is also purchased where necessary.



Photo: Henri Tuomi

Preserving plastic materials is challenging. Conservator Maarit Jones places silicone-coated paper inside a raincoat, which helps preserve it.

6.9.2 Digitisation of collections

Digitisation promotes the accessibility of collections and improves their preservation. For our photograph collections, we digitise items by photographing them and, in the process, aim to follow quality-management recommendations for cultural heritage materials. In the digitisation plan for photograph collections, updated in 2026, we prioritised the digitisation of the oldest and most vulnerable materials, customer work, and forthcoming exhibition and publication projects.

The digitisation of the archive collection proceeds in project phases. We digitise AV collections as an outsourced service.

We digitise artefact collections by taking photographs. We take identification photographs of most objects, but whenever possible, we aim to use object photographs taken by a photographer. At the very minimum, archaeologists take identification photographs of objects or fragments found during the museum's excavations that are to be catalogued.

In the future, we will experiment with new digital methods (such as photogrammetry and laser scanning) for a three-dimensional collection to improve accessibility. For example, in 2026, the City Executive Office created a 3D model from a scale model depicting Helsinki in the 1870s.

Digital documentation and ensuring the long-term preservation of cultural heritage in digital form are also emphasised in the protection of cultural property.

Photo: Henri Tuomi



Media assistant Maija Pöysti cleans a print before digitising it.

6.9.3 Displaying collections and exhibition spaces

When collections are displayed in exhibitions, the visitor experience and exhibition content form the basis of the design. Other central criteria for selecting objects are their condition, and the wear and tear caused by their use in exhibitions. When displaying the objects, the aim is to ensure the best possible conditions for their preservation, taking these aspects into account. Of the museum's exhibition spaces, only the exhibition spaces on the City Museum's 2nd and 4th floors are climate-controlled. In other museums, especially at Villa Hakasalmi, exhibition use places a significant strain on the objects. The service officers maintain and monitor the exhibition spaces and objects in accordance with the principles of preventive conservation, in cooperation with conservators.

6.9.4 Collections storage and logistics

The Artefact team is responsible for the operations of the City Museum's two collection centres and for collections logistics. The chief curator who leads the team, with the curators, conservators, museum assistants and museum technicians, is responsible for collections storage and its development. The chief curator and the collection centre conservator have the primary responsibility for the operation of the collection centres.

Collections logistics are mainly handled by museum technicians and museum assistants assigned to transport duties. They and the conservators design and implement appropriate transport and storage packaging for objects. The practices and guidelines for collections logistics are described in the collections logistics process. There are also separate instructions for ordering collection transport.





Collection objects require handling and storage conditions that are appropriate for their material. Museum technician Timo Leskinen uses a forklift to lift an illuminated sign from the clothing store Liitos-Asuste. Researcher Salla Rimpinen examines the art collection, whose framed works have been hung on mesh walls.

Photos: Henri Tuomi.

6.10 Collections security, risk management and collection insurance

The principles of preventive conservation form the basis of the City Museum's collections security. We assess the risks to the security of the collections as part of the museum's risk management process four times a year, in line with the budget forecast schedule.

With HAM, we began preparing an evacuation and rescue plan in the autumn of 2025 for the joint collection centre. First, we will produce incident response cards. The City Museum has not systematically identified harmful and/or hazardous objects in its collections, but the survey will be scheduled and planned as part of the collections evacuation and rescue plan. The contingency plan for the Culture and Leisure Division includes the protection of cultural property as a critical task for the division. These protective measures are being prepared as part of contingency planning.

The City Museum's collections are stored in climate-controlled facilities at the joint collection centre shared with HAM, and in the negatives and prints archive. There is no climate control in the K3 collection centre. All collection storage facilities have a fire alarm and/or extinguishing system.

As part of its collections-security risk management, the City Museum has a quarantine policy that aims to prevent contamination and the spread of insect pests through objects, loans, props and borrowed props.

The City Museum's collections are not insured, as the City of Helsinki does not insure its property; instead, losses and risks are covered through the City of Helsinki's Insurance Fund. In the case of collection loans, the lending museum is responsible for insuring the objects on loan up to the insured value specified by the City Museum. When the City Museum receives a loan, it submits an insurance fund notification to the Financial and Planning Department of the City Executive Office, stating the insurance value as provided by the lender.

6.11 Loans, deposits and collection transfers

Helsinki City Museum is committed to the idea of collection mobility, which is mentioned in the Museum Policy Programme[3] and is central to the activities of the TAKO network. This is primarily implemented by lending collection objects to other professionally managed museums for exhibitions. Collection loans are an opportunity to showcase our diverse collections to new audiences.

Collection objects may also be lent for scientific, research or educational purposes, after a case-by-case consideration. However, loans are not available for private individuals. Loan requests are always submitted by email, and the loan is granted by the chief curator. Loans are always for a fixed term, and the loan service is subject to a fee. The loan terms and fees are available on the museum's website.

The City Museum does not accept new incoming long-term loans, i.e. deposits. A list of current deposits can be found in the museum's records.

Nor do we generally deposit our own collections elsewhere. Instead of depositing, it is usually more appropriate to transfer a collection object or part of a collection entirely to the custody of another organisation. There can be many different reasons for collection transfers, which may be linked to TAKO acquisition and documentation responsibilities, for example. No issues related to the repatriation of cultural property have thus far been identified in the City Museum's collections.

The loan conditions of the City Museum

The loan conditions and loan fees of the City Museum

3 The Museum of Opportunities – The Ministry of Education and Culture's Museum Policy Programme 2030

7. ADOPTION OF THE COLLECTIONS POLICY, PUBLICITY AND FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

The collections policy document maintains and creates a shared understanding of the City Museum's collections mission and its implementation methods. We have drawn up its guidelines and objectives in relation to the concept of the City Museum: Let's tell the stories of Helsinki together!

The Museum Director manages the collections policy in cooperation with the manager of the Cultural Heritage Unit and the curators. This is supplemented by the teams' action plans. Responsibility for maintaining the process has been delegated to the manager of the Cultural Heritage Unit. The collections policy is approved by the Executive Director of the Culture and Leisure Division.

Collections policy responds to changes in the operating environment, and we will assess the need to update the entire document again in 2030. Processes and appendices are updated as required.

The City Museum's collections policy is available on the City Museum's website in Finnish, English and Swedish.

The following people have been involved in the work on this collections policy:

The collections policy work was carried out in 2025–2026 by a team consisting of **Satu Alaja, Merilla Laitinen, Magnus Rask, Salla Rimpinen, Anne Salminen, Minna Sarantola-Weiss, Satu Savia, Tommi Uutela** and **Jonina Vaahtolammi** in collaboration with their colleagues.

Helsinki City Museum

Helsinki