



Museum of Domestic  
Design & Architecture

# Learning & Access Policy

4<sup>th</sup> Edition (2019)

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## Contents

1. Statement of Purpose .....	3
2. Audiences .....	3
3. Audience Development.....	4
4. MoDA's Commitment to Learning and Access .....	6
5. Physical Access.....	7
6. Intellectual Access.....	10
7. Cultural, emotional and financial access .....	11
8. Engaging with users and improving their experience.....	12

## 1. Statement of Purpose

The Museum of Domestic Design and Architecture's Mission is:

*"To preserve and hold in trust for society MoDA's internationally important collections which relate to British domestic design and architecture 1870-1960. To be an exemplary University Museum, making the collections available to all for inspiration, learning and enjoyment".*

This document outlines MoDA's policy of providing access to the collections and associated information. We define access as something that is enabled when physical, sensory, intellectual, cultural, emotional and financial barriers are removed, reduced, or overcome. We aim to support learning through and about the museum's collections for students, teaching staff, researchers and members of the public, in accordance with our stated Key Aims:

- To contribute to student learning and achievement within the Higher Education sector, with a specific focus on Middlesex University.
- To enable local, national and international access to the collections, for members of the public, students, researchers and creative practitioners, through leadership of innovative and ambitious museum practice.
- To support the research environment within the UK and internationally, and to contribute to Middlesex University's Research Strategy, through the development of innovative and sustainable partnerships.

MoDA is part of Middlesex University's Library and Student Support Service. As such, part of our focus is on the learning needs of Middlesex University students. More generally, we support the University's strategies on Research and make a significant contribution to the wider Higher Education environment. This policy is informed by our regular and ongoing consultation with our primary users (academic staff and students at Middlesex University), and we gather additional data through online surveys. As a public museum, we also ensure that MoDA's collections are made available, both physically and intellectually, to the wider public.

## 2. Audiences

- Middlesex University students (pre-sessional, undergraduate and postgraduate)
- Middlesex University academic staff
- Undergraduate and postgraduate students from other HE institutions
- Research and teaching staff from other HE institutions
- Independent Researchers (authors/artists/creative practitioners etc)
- Special Interest Groups/Individuals
- General Interest users
- Other museums and museum professionals
- Picture library researchers, Copyright holders & licensees

The Museum of Domestic Design and Architecture is managed via Middlesex University's Library and Student Support service. Consequently a significant proportion of our attention is directed towards supporting learning and research at Middlesex.

We also have a remit within the wider Higher Education community, and with interested audiences beyond Middlesex University. These relationships with people beyond Middlesex (including for example researchers, artists/ creative practitioners, curators, representatives of other cultural organisations) frequently feed into work with our internal audiences, bringing benefit to Middlesex students in the form of more varied perspectives and opportunities.

### 3. Audience Development

The following points address what we intend to do to meet Accreditation standard 8, "Understand and develop your audiences"

#### 3.1 Understand who uses your museum and who doesn't (Accreditation Standard 8.1)

Our core target audiences are Middlesex University students. We work closely with academic tutors from a range of disciplinary backgrounds to use our collections to support the intended learning outcomes of various undergraduate and postgraduate degrees. We adapt our learning approaches and the uses of the collections for each case, through regular consultation with tutors, to ensure they fit the needs of students and the curricula.

The student population of Middlesex University is extremely diverse with at least 40% of students from minority ethnic origins, and a large proportion of international students. Around one fifth of staff identify themselves as from minority ethnic origins. Through regular partnerships, we enable equality of access and provide greater diversity in the sources of learning and engagement. We also facilitate learning for those for whom English is not a first language, or whose knowledge of British history and culture may be limited.

We do not have exhibition spaces but we are open by appointment to everyone, including members of the wider public. We do not consider engagement with local audiences to be a high priority since the communities of interest that are associated with our collections are wide and geographically diverse rather than specific to the local area. In order to facilitate access to our collections by the largest number of users we prioritize engagement with our audiences online. However, we also take steps, within the limits of our resources, to make the collections more widely available to the general public. We do this through for example: loans to other venues; publications aimed at general (rather than academic/specialist) audiences; regular 'in conversation' afternoon on collections-related themes; and engagement with wider audiences through our website and social media. We consistently make provision for alternative forms of access to information about the museum's collections.

### 3.2 Use information to assess your users' needs (Accreditation Standard 8.2)

We work closely with tutors to ensure that student sessions that are based around the museum's collections have clearly defined learning outcomes, and we gather feedback from students after those sessions.

We have begun to collect student feedback through university module evaluations (Evametrics), and aim to gather more qualitative feedback in the academic year 2019-20 across a range of teaching sessions.

Audiences are able to engage with our collections online and by appointment. Appointments are available all year round, with no requirements regarding academic credentials etc. We also receive enquiries about a range of collections-related matters from members of the public via email and we aim to respond within 3-5 working days.

We collect data from our study room users after their visit, taking this into account to improve the delivery of our services to researchers, visitors. We also gather and analyse data on the use of our website and social media via targeted surveys and through analytics, and we use these to inform future development.

Our website is designed on the assumption that users will browse rather than search, meaning that there are no requirements for students to possess prior knowledge either of the museum's collections or of the subject areas more generally.

We aim to make MoDA's website more accessible to students in future through the introduction of a 'Discover' section that will include learning resources and make the connections between the museum's collections and other parts of the curriculum clearer.

### 3.3 Have a plan for developing your range of users (Accreditation Standard 8.3)

MoDA's Learning and Access Policy is based on a specific understanding of the needs of our existing audiences and the ways in which we can best meet their needs. As a university museum we are particularly focussed on the needs of Middlesex University students. Historically we have mainly worked with students and staff from the Faculty of Arts and Creative Industries. We are increasingly building links with other Faculties across Health and Social Sciences and the Business School enabling us to increase the number and diversity of students with whom we work and the range of approaches we take to the museum's collections.

We continuously seek to expand our external audience base through innovative means which are not dependent on the provision of physical gallery space. We have an active presence on social media (Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest, Instagram) and we regularly loan items to exhibitions in other venues.

We think of audiences as belonging to four broad categories: Browser, Follower, Searcher or Researcher. (This model has been adapted from Morris Hargreaves McIntyre, *Never Mind the Quality Feel the Width*, 2005). This approach informs what we offer to different categories of user, and the ways in which we communicate with them:

- **Browsers** include users that have a general interest in the collections; if they have bought a book or other product based on MoDA's collections; or if they have visited one of our touring exhibitions in other venues. We aim to meet their needs by producing excellent quality publications, and seek to engage their interest by encouraging them to join the mailing list, follow us on social media etc.
- **Followers** include users that have an interest in the collections, as with Browsers, but have also signed up to our mailing list, are regular readers of our blog, follow us on twitter etc. We aim to meet the needs of Followers by producing good quality e-newsletters; by maintaining a well-managed mailing list; by consistently producing good quality content for our website, blog and other social media.
- **Searchers** include people who engage with MoDA's collections in the study room as part of a group visit or student session. These sessions are tailored to the needs of the group and are run by well-informed, well-trained staff.
- **Researchers** include individuals who come to MoDA to use the collections for their own purposes and interests; they may be undergraduate or postgraduate students, academics, freelance writers, journalists, licensees, or members of the public without any academic affiliation. Researchers see the collections by appointment, and generally have a specific question in mind; the role of MoDA staff is to support their research by facilitating their visit in terms of both physical and intellectual access.

MoDA's Learning and Access Policy is based on the assumption that we should aim to increase the numbers in the 'Browser' category, and seek to increase their level of engagement (from 'Browser' towards 'Researcher'). The website ([www.moda.mdx.ac.uk](http://www.moda.mdx.ac.uk)) was intentionally designed to meet the needs of Browsers, users who do not have a clear search question in mind. We seek to provide an excellent service for users in all categories, as outlined in sections 3-7.

Future plans include: a podcast that makes connections between the collections and current research/artistic practice; further developments to our website; the appointment of an Artist in Residence (subject to funding); conservation and digitization of key parts of the collection; development of open access publications based on scholarly yet accessible presentation of the museum's collections and our approaches to museum learning in response to our target audience of university students.

#### 4. MoDA's Commitment to Learning and Access

MoDA is committed to providing access for learning, research and enjoyment to the widest possible audiences, within constraints necessarily imposed by available resources, as well as considerations for the conservation and security of the collection. The museum is open to the public by appointment, and all visitors are welcomed. (For example, we do not require

visitors to produce personal identification or academic credentials). The collections are also made available in other ways, as set out in this policy.

This commitment extends to our workforce as well as visitors. We are committed to ongoing training in access issues for staff, and this Access Policy is available to all users and potential users on our website.

#### 4.1 Relevant Legislation

Our approach to this area is guided by the Equality Act 2010, and the Data Protection Act, 2018.

#### 4.2 Access Review

Through a process of regular audit and review, we will assess, identify and address existing access issues, as resources permit. We will use this evidence to continue to build accessibility into all areas of our work.

#### 4.3 MoDA Staff and Advisory Board

As employees of Middlesex University, all MoDA staff are expected to comply with national statutes of law, including specifically, but not exclusively the Equality Act (2010) and the Data Protection Act (2018). Staff receive training on the Equality and Diversity Policy of Middlesex University, which includes age, disability, gender, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation.

Middlesex University's recruitment procedures comply with current Equal Opportunities legislation and best practice to ensure that potential candidates are not discriminated against on the basis of age, disability, gender, race, religion or belief or sexual orientation. All new members of staff will be thoroughly briefed on the museum's educational role as part of their induction, even if not directly relevant to their post.

As a university employer, Middlesex encourages staff to continually develop their own learning and reflect on their practice. Staff participate in Middlesex University's Appraisal scheme which encourages them to assess their own training needs.

Staff are expected to take responsibility for own professional development and to continue to develop their own interest in the collections with particular relevance to their specific job descriptions.

It is a requirement of membership that MoDA's Advisory Board should be supportive of the educational purpose of the museum, and that members should be enthusiastic champions of this policy. Members of the Advisory Board and relevant colleagues within Middlesex University will be regularly briefed on the contents of this document.

## 5. Physical Access

### 5.1 Access information

- Information about physical access to MoDA (including location, opening hours, access) is available on our website. We also provide contact information (email, phone, address) and instructions for to make an appointment (using a form or via email).

- All visitors who visit MoDA do so by appointment, and we are able to make reasonable adjustments to take account of physical impairment if we are made aware of these in advance.
- We are committed to enabling people with physical disabilities to reach and appreciate the museum. Where physical access poses severe problems, alternative arrangements may be made to provide some experience of that part of the collection or service for visitors.
- The space is fully wheelchair accessible and there are wheelchair parking spaces just outside; one of the two toilets is wheelchair accessible.
- We take account of visitors with disabilities in all safety procedures, providing training to staff in the evacuation of people with disabilities.
- The Study Room can accommodate a maximum of 12 users at one time. In order to accommodate larger groups we regularly give talks and presentations to students and other users in alternative spaces on campus or elsewhere.

## 5.2 Arrival and car parking

- The museum is situated approximately half a mile from Colindale tube station, on the Northern Line.
- Parking is available (parking meters are in use); bicycle racks are available.
- Designated disabled parking spaces are available close to the museum entrance, but we are not able to reserve spaces for visitors.
- Clear signage is available within the museum, but it is not tactile or Braille.
- There is a doorbell at the museum entrance.
- Entrance from the street into the museum is flat and smooth. The street is well-lit.

## 5.3 WCs

- There are two public lavatories in the museum reception area, one of which is wheelchair accessible; both lavatories are unisex.
- The facilities are clearly signposted from the reception area by use of black text on silver background signage.
- Access to the accessible WC is via a single leaf door, 90cm wide, which opens outwards and to the left using a horizontal grab bar 70cm from the floor, and can be closed from inside using a horizontal grab bar 70cm from the floor.
- The toilet seat in the accessible WC is 45cm high; it is positioned in one corner so that when sitting on the toilet transfer on and off would be to the user's right. There is one fixed vertical grab rail and one fixed horizontal grab rail on the right hand (wall) side at 70cm height.
- The sink in the accessible WC is wall hung with nothing below it, positioned at 75cm from the floor. It has a lever operated thermostatic mixer tap. The vertical grab rail is immediately to the right of the sink.
- There is an emergency pull cord, but there is no flashing light fire alarm for individuals with hearing disabilities.
- Total floor area in the disabled WC measures 2.2 x 1.5 metres.



#### 5.4 Security and Safety Information

- Fire exits are clearly signposted.
- The university security service can be called in emergencies.

#### 5.5 Physical access to the collections

- Our **Collections Care and Conservation Policy** makes clear that our aim is to ensure that as many objects as possible are safe to be handled by users.
- We take a holistic approach to the care of collections in order to maximize their potential for use. For example, we prioritize improvements to storage to facilitate handling rather than working on the conservation of specific individual objects.
- We emphasise the fact that visitors experience close personal engagement with objects and we achieve this through, for example, investment in polyester sleeves which means that items can be seen and handled without damage. Our aim is to make the majority of items in the collections suitable to be handled by study room users and in teaching sessions with students.
- We actively seek external funding for conservation projects targeted towards those areas of the collections which attract most use.
- It is not our policy to regard online access as a replacement for physical access to collections. However in some instances we make digital versions of particularly fragile objects available online with the specific intention of reducing damage caused by handling (see for example, the Palladio wallpaper digitisation project). In other instances, we have acquired a 'handling collection' of similar objects to enable users to access parts of the collection with the intention of reducing damage caused by handling.
- We do not have exhibition galleries, but we ensure physical access to our collections by the wider public by agreeing loans of objects to external exhibitions in other venues when appropriate. See MoDA's [Loans Policy](#).
- We offer regular 'In Conversation' afternoons aimed at making specific parts of the collections accessible to members of the public.
- We offer learning sessions with students using specific parts of the collection both at the museum and on campus to fit their learning needs. Learning sessions include: presentations; hands-on workshops; general inductions; extended projects embedded within the curriculum, and extra-curricular projects involving students from a wide range of courses.
- We produce a printed leaflet for students explaining appropriate ways for accessing the collections.

#### 5.6 Physical access to the website

- Our website is specifically designed to be accessible on the majority of current devices and browsers.
- We aim to work towards WGAG 2.1 best practice guidelines for the design of our website.
- Our **Style Guide** provides guidance on the use of image tags and captions which contribute to the website's accessibility.

## 6. Intellectual Access

We are committed to using a range of interpretive methods to engage users with our collections through face-to-face and online learning, and research.

### 6.1 Intellectual access – face-to-face learning

- We recognise that people have different preferred modes of learning and provide a variety of interpretive methods to suit a range of learning styles.
- All visits to the museum by individual students or researchers are planned as supported learning experiences, tailored to that individual's or group's specific learning needs. We achieve this through dialogue with academic tutors, visitors, pedagogical research and further research into our collections.
- As a University museum we prioritise our engagement with Middlesex students and staff, in order to make our collection and associated resources integral to the university curriculum across a wide range of courses.
- We deliver object-based learning sessions for students that take account of their prior knowledge and experience, and which are appropriate to their discipline and level of study, working closely with academic colleagues.
- It is our policy to ensure that staff are appropriately qualified and experienced to support learning within a Higher Education context. All MoDA staff are encouraged to undertake professional development such as completion of the PGCertHE and Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy.
- MoDA's Curator for Student Engagement is specifically tasked with working alongside academic tutors to support students' learning. All other posts are supportive of student or public access to the collections in various ways.
- Historically we have mainly worked with students and staff from the Faculty of Arts and Creative Industries. We are increasingly building links with other Faculties across Health and Social Sciences and the Business School enabling us to increase the number and diversity of students with whom we work.
- We regularly answer enquiries from members of the public on a variety of matters relating to our collections.

### 6.2 Intellectual access – online and digital

- Content available online includes a range of formats (video, text, visual, audio), to suit the needs of different learners, in line with best practice within higher education pedagogy.
- Our **Style Guide** specifies various ways in which we aim to ensure that information associated with the collections is accessible to all.
- The website is designed to provide "ways in" to the collections for people with a variety of interests: information on the website is layered, with opportunities for people to go deeper if they wish. For example, we provide reading lists or suggestions for further resources on specific topics. We are building an online resource section that will additional interpretive pathways into our collections.
- We are strongly committed to a policy of co-creation and recognize and celebrate the fact that our users are co-producers of knowledge. We define co-creation as the process of engagement between our audiences, ourselves and the museum's

collections to create something new (including for example, new creative work, online resources, podcasts, publications, performances and so on). We publicize these outputs on our website and via social media.

- We aim to digitize and make available a representative selection of items from our collection and make them available on the website: our emphasis is on the quality of information within these records, and the quality of links between records, rather than the overall total.
- As outlined in our **Documentation Policy**, we categorise object records as basic, standard or optimal level; and only those categorized as 'optimal' can be published online. This is to ensure that records that are published have accurate and well-written captions, have images of appropriate standards, and that copyright has been checked.
- All catalogue information is available to all staff via our Collections Management system (CI+) only selected items are made available to the public online, but staff are able to make additional information available to users on request as appropriate.
- Providing online access to our collections makes them available to a wide range of people despite the constraints of our geographical location.

### 6.3 Intellectual access –research and research dissemination

- MoDA aims to support the growing research culture at Middlesex University and to align with the University's Research Strategy. We also aim to make a significant contribution to wider Higher Education research environment.
- Our **Digital Preservation Policy** outlines our approach to developing and maintaining records of the museum's activities, including research outputs.
- We maintain records of research data through the University's research data management system, Figshare, based on the principle that research data should be findable, accessible, interoperable and re-usable.
- We aim to disseminate the results of collections-based research to a wider public via our website, through online exhibitions and public events when possible, and through publications.
- We make decisions about how to publish our own research on the collections based on a combination of factors including cost and breadth of distribution, ie public impact. In future, publication is likely to involve a combination of online and in-print publishing models.

## 7. Cultural, emotional and financial access

### 7.1 Cultural access

- The student population of Middlesex University is extremely diverse with at least 40% of students from minority ethnic origins, and a large proportion of international students. Around one fifth of staff identify themselves as from minority ethnic origins. Through regular partnerships with academic tutors we enable equality of access and provide greater diversity in the sources of learning and engagement.
- Our working language is English but we also facilitate learning for those for whom English is not a first language, or whose knowledge of British history and culture may be limited.

- Our website is based on the assumption that users will browse rather than search, meaning that there are no requirements for students (or other users) to possess prior knowledge either of the museum's collections or of the subject areas more generally.
- We aim to make MoDA's website more accessible to students in future through the introduction of a 'Discover' section which will make the connections between the museum's collections and other parts of the curriculum clearer.
- As well as supporting students' learning while at Middlesex we aim to give students the cultural confidence to access other museums during their studies and after they have graduated.

### 7.2 Emotional and attitudinal access

- We aim to ensure that the museum environment and museum staff are welcoming to all visitors.
- All staff put learners first, whether those learners are students, researchers or members of the public.
- The Co-creation page of MoDA's website celebrates and validates different kinds of learning and achievement in relation to the museum's collections.

### 7.3 Financial access

- Admission to MoDA is free to all users by appointment.
- We make small charges for picture library images in order to cover the costs of our photographer and administration.

## 8. Engaging with users and improving their experience

We aim to build accessibility and learning into all areas of our work. This section details our policy with regards to meeting the requirements of section 9 of the Accreditation standard.

### 8.1 Provide stimulating learning and discovery activities, including exhibitions and programmes based on the collections (Accreditation Standard 9.1)

We consider our varied audiences and their different learning styles in our provision of educational resources online and information associated to the collections. We have a process of regular audit and review to assess, identify and address existing access issues, as resources permit. We support learning in various forms and through different activities:

We are aware of different learning styles in the context of formal learning with university students, working closely with Middlesex University staff. We are broadening the scope of our collaborations to include further digitisation projects, an Artist in Residence, podcasts, videos, online resources, and specialist conferences/workshops.

For users external to the university, we provide new learning opportunities based on the collections, including: online resources, a podcast series, publications aimed at general rather than specialist audiences, loans to exhibitions elsewhere, digital resources, and regular 'In Conversation' afternoons.

## 8.2 Communicate effectively with users and potential users through a range of access, marketing and promotional activities (Accreditation Standard 9.2)

We use Mailchimp software to maintain our mailing list and provide regular newsletters to subscribers to communicate information about museum activities, forthcoming events and other learning and access opportunities. We have a large following on Twitter (around 12.5k followers), and a smaller but growing presence on Facebook and Instagram. We are continuing to develop our online and social media presence (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest), and aim to use these channels to promote the collections and associated events and content. Our launch of a podcast series will increase the exposure of our collections to new audiences and provide new forms of online access to the museum.

We work closely with academics to support student learning, extending partnerships with colleagues from Arts and Design subjects and beyond. We aim to develop a more student-centred online presence in collaboration with Middlesex University Student Union.

We use the Co-Creation page of our website to showcase the many ways in which students and other users make use of the museum's collections. We actively promote these pages in order to encourage new users to see the potential relevance of the museum to their own interests and practice.

We regularly take part in external events (conferences, external lectures) to share our knowledge and expertise and to discuss our approach as a university museum with colleagues in the HE and museum sectors. Maintaining visibility in wider academic circles is an important part of promoting the museum to new potential users.

**August 2019**