

History of the Documentation of World Art Collections at Royal Pavilion & Museums

1861	<p>Museum opens in the Pavilion. Mostly Egyptology and Ethnography material.</p> <p>Of the documentation that exists, one ledger contains a list of contributions from this period but appears to have been done retrospectively in the late 1880s. Archaeology and Ethnography specimens are grouped into one collection, organised by continent, with items from Africa given a catalogue number with the prefix AF</p>																									
1873	<p>Museum opens in the current Dome building. Objects marked with catalogue numbers.</p>																									
1890	<p>Collections in existence are Ethnography, Natural Sciences, Archaeology</p> <p>From 1890 all objects entering the permanent collection at Brighton Museum & Art Gallery were recorded in an Accession Register. They were numbered from 1 upwards preceded by an R (for Registered). In many cases several items would come in in one go and they were given part numbers. So R numbers can appear in the formats R1234 or R4321/1, R4321/2 etc.</p> <p>In the early registers catalogue numbers continued alongside R numbers. The first AF catalogue number in Accession Register B is R88 / AF277. Therefore anything with a lower number than that must have been acquired before 1890.</p> <p>List of Accession Registers:</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>B</td> <td>R1</td> <td>-</td> <td>R1620</td> <td>1890-1915</td> </tr> <tr> <td>C</td> <td>R1621</td> <td>-</td> <td>R2420</td> <td>1915-1922</td> </tr> <tr> <td>D</td> <td>R2421</td> <td>-</td> <td>R3279</td> <td>1922-1930</td> </tr> <tr> <td>E</td> <td>R3280</td> <td>-</td> <td>R4254</td> <td>1930-1937</td> </tr> <tr> <td>F</td> <td>R4255</td> <td>-</td> <td>R5850</td> <td>1937-1970</td> </tr> </table>	B	R1	-	R1620	1890-1915	C	R1621	-	R2420	1915-1922	D	R2421	-	R3279	1922-1930	E	R3280	-	R4254	1930-1937	F	R4255	-	R5850	1937-1970
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1896-1939	<p>Herbert Toms in post as Curator</p> <p>Toms had previously worked with Augustus Henry Lane Fox Pitt Rivers, who influenced Toms' approach to documenting Brighton Museum's collections.</p>																									
1968	<p>Separate registers begin for different collections, including separate registers for Archaeology and Ethnography. Blue hardcover A4 daybooks were also used for most collections.</p> <p>Eth - was used for "Ethnography". Accession numbers were changed into the format <i>collection letter – object number – year</i>. For example, E-1-1969. If there were part numbers, they were written <i>collection letter – object number – part number – year</i> e.g. E-1-4-1969.</p> <p>The Eth register was used from 1968-1984.</p>																									
1971	<p>Dr. George Banks is employed as the first Keeper of Ethnography at the museum.</p>																									

	He continued in this post until 1980.
1983	Computerised accessioning began. Move to six figure (also known as computer) numbers. World Art objects are assigned a six figure number with the prefix WA e.g. WA508128
1995	Introduction of the mimsy2000 collections management system (database). Computer data is converted into the new system. All data is in UPPER CASE.
2006	Upgrade to mimsyxg, installation of dedicated server wap-multimimsy.
2012-2015	<p>Asset Bank, a digital asset management system, developed to manage digital media including images of the collections, as well as digital assets used for marketing, programming, education etc. Used alongside Mimsy.</p> <p>Collectionsbase, developed and utilised to run The Keep website, then adopted for RPM website. Used to extract data from museum collections database for publication on the museum's websites.</p>
2017	<p>Upgrade to MimsyXg in Aug 2017.</p> <p>The museum reverts back to using R numbers for new acquisitions across all collections, so the WA numbering system is no longer used.</p> <p>There are currently over 16000 objects listed on MimsyXg in the World Art collection.) Over 6000 of these are objects from Africa.</p>

Kathleen Lawther, Freelance Project Curator, Making African Connections, January 2020

(Adapted from A history of the documentation system at RP&M, edited by Katie Hobbs, October 2019)