

‘The MMN has been consistently excellent, bringing together those with challenging collections, helping them to work together, and sharing skills and experience. As a result, numismatic collections are used more widely and in a more varied manner than at any point for a generation.’

*Andrew Woods,
Curator of Numismatics,
York Museums Trust*

The British
Museum

The Money and Medals Network

Fostering knowledge and
expertise around the UK's
numismatic collections





Foreword

Building partnerships is at the heart of what we do at the British Museum. UK museums contain wonderfully diverse collections which tell local as well as national stories, and they have huge potential for display, research and public enjoyment. Working together with other museums, galleries and heritage organisations across the country allows us to maximise the potential of our collections, share knowledge and learn from each other. These collaborations take many different forms; the Money and Medals Network is one important aspect of our national partnership work.

In an ever-shifting cultural landscape, UK museums and galleries sometimes lack the specialist in-house expertise to research and care for their collections. To counter this, Arts Council England have generously funded a range of Subject Specialist Networks to be a vital source of information and support. These networks provide advice and assistance in specific subject areas, helping to consolidate levels of knowledge and demystify certain types of objects through training and outreach. This ensures that specialist information is shared rather than lost, and makes these collections more accessible to the public.

The Money and Medals Network is the UK's numismatic Subject Specialist Network, supported by Arts Council England, delivered in partnership with nine UK numismatic organisations and based at the British Museum. Numismatics is arguably one of the most 'at risk' subjects due to the relative rarity of specialist curators in this field, so the work of the Money and Medals Network to build expertise across the sector becomes ever more important. I am delighted to see that it has proven successful and beneficial to organisations across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. We are proud to call so many UK cultural institutions our partners. I look forward to seeing the Money and Medals Network expand and develop further over the coming years.

Hartwig Fischer
Director of the British Museum

Introduction

Arts Council England's Subject Specialist Network programme provides funding to projects which seek to improve the museum sector's knowledge and expertise around specialist collections. This, in turn, enables curatorial staff in museums of all sizes to use their collections confidently for greater public engagement, education and enjoyment. The Money and Medals Network is an excellent example of a network held in high regard and we are pleased to support its work, and to see it go from strength to strength.

The value of Subject Specialist Networks lies in their ability to act as a democratic forum for the benefit of all museum staff, whether volunteer, newly qualified or long-standing staff members. Participants benefit from shared expertise, opportunities to learn how to develop research practice, mentoring opportunities, and best practice techniques using their own collections. They can also engage in the development of new insights and methodologies around curatorial practice.

Benefiting from the British Museum's leadership, the Money and Medals Network utilises the highest levels of curatorial knowledge and experience. The dedicated team of experts makes a significant contribution to the development of a skilled and confident museum workforce across the UK.

Paula Brikci,
*Manager for Collections Development and Designation,
Arts Council England*

About us

The Money and Medals Network (MMN) is an Arts Council England co-funded project that exists to build and develop relationships between UK museums and other public institutions with collections of coins, medals, banknotes and associated objects, and to promote links between these bodies and individual enthusiasts and collectors around the country.



About the MMN

Founded in 2008, the MMN has been ACE-supported since 2011. It seeks to provide practical advice and support to people working with numismatic collections across the UK, and promote awareness of these collections. It is administered through the British Museum's Department of Coins and Medals by a Project Curator and is overseen by a steering group drawn from the British Museum and partner institutions.

A vital role

Subject specialist networks like the MMN play a vital role in offering support to museums in what can sometimes be challenging circumstances. The MMN seeks to expand numismatic expertise through collections mapping, bolstering links between national and local museums, and training for anyone in the museum and heritage sector.

Speakers and attendees at a Stage 2 training day at the University of Nottingham Museum. © Alan Fletcher/ashotinthedark.

Numismatic pinning technique training. © Mark Simmons Photography.

The Money and Medals Newsletter.



Collections mapping and training

The MMN's collections mapping project is published on the Money and Medals website for everyone to use. The Money and Medals training programme was launched in 2013 and has spread across the UK, seeking to attract as many people as possible from any museum position to learn more, gain skills and make useful contacts.

Keeping in touch

The newsletter, which comes out three times a year, features articles, news and a list of events and lectures. Each issue focuses on a different theme with contributions from numismatists from all over the UK and beyond. The newsletter also includes exhibition reviews, updates from major numismatic collection centres, and contributions from regional partners. MMN members are encouraged to subscribe and submit news items.



MMN membership

The MMN is open to UK public institutions of any type with numismatic collections of any size. Numismatics is a surprisingly broad subject – the MMN's members include both general and specialist museums, libraries, universities and country houses. As of October 2016, membership consists of nearly 150 institutions, from national museums to regimental and transport museums, as well as smaller museums with specific remits. The ultimate aim is to disseminate numismatic expertise as far as possible. This is done through site visits by the Project Curator, free training and the nurturing of regional support networks, and through contact details for specialists in different numismatic fields, available on the website.

‘Since joining the Network we have improved storage for the coins, medals and paper money, and have incorporated objects from the collection into more exhibitions and displays.’

*Victoria Slade, Senior Curator (Human History),
Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum*

Collections mapping

The MMN has been mapping collections across the UK since 2008. The project is an integral part of the MMN's work. It has built up a definitive picture of numismatic holdings in UK museums for anyone with a professional or general interest in the subject.



Sharing data

Mapping began with the major collection centres in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and has now extended to cover as many institutions as possible. The project is open to anyone with a willingness to share collections information.

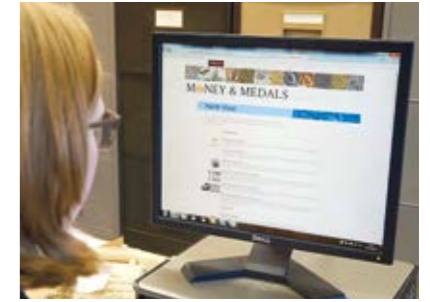
Questionnaire

The collections mapping process begins with the distribution of a questionnaire asking for details about numismatic collections. It asks for a breakdown of the types of numismatic objects in the collection, details of the collection's public access, the institution's approach in terms of display, and the use of numismatics in education and outreach projects. This information helps to prepare for the next stage of the process – an informal visit from the MMN Project Curator.



Project Curator visit

Assessment trips are an integral part of the project – as many museums as possible receive a visit from the Project Curator. Visits are open to any museum or public institution with a numismatic collection, regardless of their size or remit. The main UK collection centres have already been covered, with over 130 institutions visited so far. During the visit, the Project Curator learns more about the collection and, where appropriate, gives practical advice on collections care, display and other matters. During the visit, the Project Curator will view the collection in storage and on display, and meet with the person responsible for its care. This initial face-to-face contact is hugely important in building long-term partnerships. The visit can help provide more information about the collection and explore ways to realise its potential. It can be the springboard for numismatic projects and the improvement of the collection's storage and use in other engagement.



An online database

After the assessment visit, each institution gets a page on the Money and Medals website, based on the information provided in the questionnaire. This information contributes to a constantly evolving online numismatic collections database. The database helps to raise awareness of the collections, painting a more accurate picture of numismatic holdings in UK institutions. As of October 2016, 128 institutions were represented on the website. Through this work, the wealth of the UK's numismatic holdings is starting to be revealed. Although the project so far represents an excellent start, there are many museums in the UK and almost all of them have a numismatic collection of some kind, so there is still much to be done.

Roman coin identification training, University of Warwick. © Alex Lloyd.

MMN Project Curator Henry Flynn discusses collections care with Jade Ryan, Victoria Gallery & Museum, University of Liverpool. © Victoria Gallery & Museum.

To learn more about collections mapping or to receive the questionnaire, email mmn@britishmuseum.org

The Money and Medals website.



Training

One of the core aspects of the MMN's remit is the provision of numismatic training for people working in UK museums. Free introductory training events are held all over the country and are open to anyone working or volunteering with collections of this type in UK public institutions.



Guidance and support

Guidance and support is vital to help people gain an understanding of numismatics, and to develop new skills. As the field becomes more challenging to specialise in, the MMN seeks to disseminate knowledge and expertise, addressing specific challenges such as the perception that numismatic objects are difficult to display.

Regional training events

Following the collections mapping of a local area, the MMN will hold a regional training event. One of the earliest aims of the project was to create regional training hubs and develop sub-networks. This is achieved through a day of local numismatic training, where all the surrounding museums, whether they are MMN participants or not, are invited to take part. The training concludes with a discussion on how things can be taken forward. These events ideally trigger locally supported numismatic training programmes, either self-sustaining or proactively supported by the MMN.

Free events for all

Thanks to the generosity of ACE, MMN training events are free of charge, meaning they are as accessible and inclusive as possible. Numismatics is a subject that unites people across all levels in the heritage sector and it is vital that the training reflects that. Initial training events are therefore pitched at an introductory level with content to appeal to as broad an audience as possible.

Sub-networks

Training has been initially focused in the north-west of England, Yorkshire, the West Midlands, the East Midlands, the East of England, the south coast, and the Highlands and central belt of Scotland. Sub-networks have successfully been established in five of these areas and more are being encouraged.

- The North West numismatic network is administered by Museum Development North West.
- In Yorkshire, the Curator of Numismatics at York Museums Trust provides numismatic support to museums in Yorkshire through site visits, training and outreach.
- A steering group based at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge (the major numismatic collections centre in the East of England) runs the East of England sub-network.
- The Department of Classics and Ancient History at the University of Warwick is now the centre of a sub-network for the West Midlands.
- The University of Nottingham Museum acts as the coordinating hub for the East Midlands sub-network.

‘MMN provided expertise and support, and we were able to provide them with a platform to work with our museums. We wouldn’t have achieved the outcomes we have if we hadn’t worked in partnership with MMN to support us along the way.’
Lynsey Jones, Museum Development Officer, Museum Development North West

Roman coin identification training, University of Warwick. © Alex Lloyd.

Dr Stanley Ireland teaching Roman coin identification training, University of Warwick. © Alex Lloyd.

The MMN training programme is divided into three stages:

Stage 1: Introducing numismatics

MMN training focuses on introductory curatorial and collections management subjects essential to the well-being of numismatic collections. The core subjects covered are storage, display, documentation and the identification of a particular type or period of coinage. The precise focus is tailored in advance by canvassing local opinion. This stage of training closes with a discussion intended to create a sub-network and shape its early development. Attendees are also asked for their feedback.

Stage 2: Education and outreach

The next stage of training can be brought to areas where a MMN event has already been held. It maintains the momentum and interest generated by initial training and will strengthen a newly created sub-network. The focus is generally on engagement subjects – education, outreach, accessibility and diversity. It can also cover curatorial subjects such as conservation and introductions to specific areas such as Roman coins or commemorative medals. There is also a practical element, introducing numismatic object pinning techniques, with the chance to practise using objects from the British Museum’s handling collection. As per the initial training, local speakers are invited to contribute and expertise can be brought in from other museums, including the British Museum and the Portable Antiquities Scheme Finds Liaison Officers from local museums. Each event is run in collaboration with the hosting institution and the MMN.

Stage 3: Sub-network events

The final stage of training consists of events held by the sub-network with minimal input from the MMN. This is an opportunity for local training programmes to provide events once or twice a year, focusing on specific subjects or providing talks on a mixture of numismatic topics. Sub-networks are encouraged to report their activities to the national Network, which can also help to publicise any events.

Roman coin and numismatic collections management training at Knowsley Hall, Merseyside. © Simon Critchley 2014, courtesy of Museum Development North West.

Future plans

The MMN has achieved much already, but there is still more to be done. The main aspiration is the building of local numismatic support networks across the whole of the UK. These can be supported by the MMN with the ultimate aim for them to be self-sustaining.



Developing the training programme

The training programme will continue to evolve and encompass relevant subjects not covered already. Updated training events will be offered to existing networks and initial training will be brought to areas that have not previously hosted MMN activity. England has been well served so far, but the aim is to consolidate work in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to ensure the MMN can maximise its impact on numismatics in museums on a national scale.

Training at the British Museum

Another aim of the MMN is to provide more specialised training held at the British Museum. This institution is a major centre of numismatic expertise and it is intended that intensive day courses on specific periods of coinage will be offered to anyone who would like to attend. Following a successful one-day course on Roman coins, similar events on medieval coinage or medals could be offered. The emphasis of the project so far has been on bringing training to the wider UK, so these future plans will enable more museums based in and around London to benefit from participating in the MMN.



Working together

The MMN has tried to tailor the training it offers to meet the needs of its participants, and this approach will continue into the future. It is vital to hear ideas from partners and work together with them to deliver the training that is needed.

Widening the reach

The MMN model has proven to be a successful one. It is hoped that through collaborations with organisations such as the International Committee for Money and Banking Museums (ICOMON), the MMN can have an impact on the international museum numismatic community by inspiring the creation of similar networks in other countries.

‘Participating in MMN provided a means of publicising our numismatic collection, which confirmed that it was of some interest and gave us the impetus to exhibit the collection in future displays.’

*David Weir,
Museum Outreach
Assistant, Craigavon
Museum Services,
Northern Ireland*

Greek and Roman coin handling session at the University of Nottingham Museum. © Alan Fletcher/ashotinthedark.

Numismatic pinning techniques training at Bristol Museum & Art Gallery. © Mark Simmons Photography.

Participants

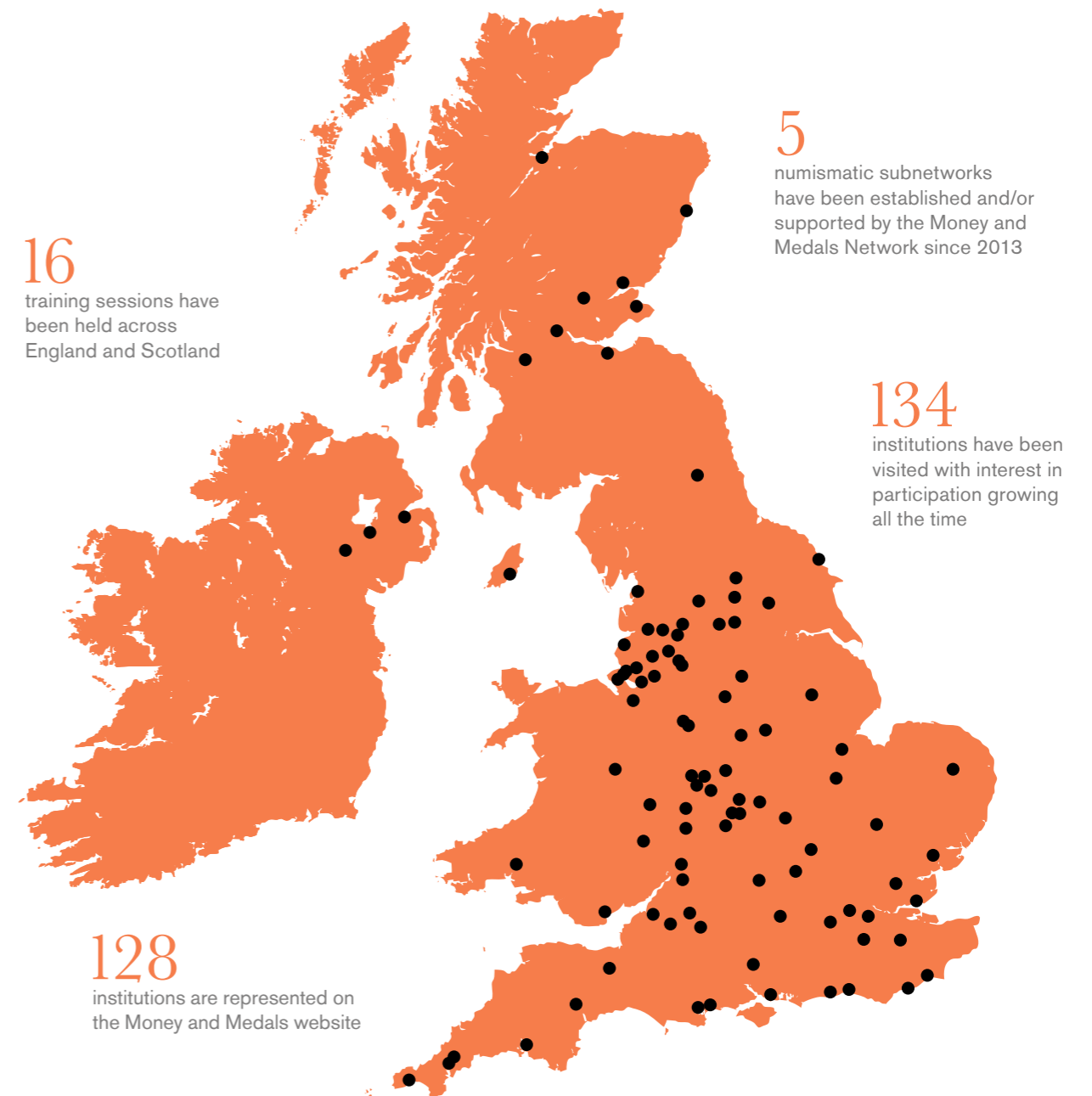
Aberdeen Maritime Museum
 Aberdeen University Museum
 Armagh Public Library
 Ashmolean Museum
 Bank of England Museum
 Barber Institute of Fine Art, University of Birmingham
 Birmingham Assay Office
 Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery
 Black Country Living Museum
 Black Watch Castle and Museum, Perth
 Blackburn Museum and Art Gallery
 Bolton Library and Museum Service
 Borough Museum and Art Gallery, Newcastle-under-Lyme
 Bradford Museums Service
 Brighton Museum and Art Gallery
 Bristol Museum and Art Gallery
 British Museum
 Bucks County Museum
 Building of Bath Museum (Bath Preservation Trust)
 Cardiff Story Museum
 Carmarthen Museum
 Chartwell, Kent
 Chatsworth House
 Chelmsford Museum
 Chippenham Museum and Heritage Centre
 Colchester Castle Museum
 Corbridge Museum (English Heritage)
 Coventry Transport Museum
 Craigavon Museums Service
 Craven Museum and Gallery, Skipton
 Derby Museum and Art Gallery
 East Riding of Yorkshire Museum Service
 Fitzwilliam Museum
 Garstang Museum of Archaeology
 Gloucester City Museum and Art Gallery
 Grosvenor Museum, Chester
 Hall Place, Bexley
 Hampton Court Palace (Historic Royal Palaces)
 Harris Museum and Art Gallery, Preston
 Harrogate Museums and Arts
 Hastings Museum and Art Gallery
 Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Coventry
 Herefordshire Museum Service
 Holburne Museum, Bath
 Horniman Museum
 Hunterian Museum and Art Gallery, Glasgow
 Imperial War Museum
 Inverness Museum and Art Gallery
 Knowsley Hall, Merseyside
 Lancaster Museum
 Leamington Spa Art Gallery and Museum
 Leeds Museums and Galleries
 Ludlow Museum
 Magic Circle Museum
 Maidstone Museum and Bentlif Art Gallery
 Manchester Museum
 Manx Museum, Isle of Man

Mary Rose Museum
 Merseyside Maritime Museum (National Museums Liverpool)
 Michael Faraday Museum (Royal Institution)
 Milford House Museum
 Museum of Bath at Work
 Museum of British Golf, St Andrews
 Museum of Freemasonry, London
 Museum of Somerset, Taunton
 Museum of the Order of St John
 Museum of the University of St Andrews
 Museum of Wigan Life
 Museum on the Mound
 Museums Sheffield
 National Army Museum
 National Maritime Museum
 National Maritime Museum Cornwall
 National Media Museum, Bradford
 National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh
 National Museum of Wales, Cardiff
 National Railway Museum, York
 No. 1 Royal Crescent (Bath Preservation Trust)
 Northampton Museum and Art Gallery
 Norton Priory Museum and Gardens, Cheshire
 Norwich Castle Museum
 Penlee House, Penzance
 Perth Museum and Art Gallery
 Peterborough Museum and Art Gallery
 Petrie Museum, London
 Plymouth Museum and Art Gallery
 Poole Museum
 Port Sunlight Museum
 Potteries Museum, Stoke-on-Trent
 Powysland Museum
 Reading Museum and Town Hall
 Ripon Museum Trust
 Roman Baths Museum, Bath
 Royal Albert Memorial Museum and Art Gallery, Exeter
 Royal Cornwall Museum, Truro
 Royal Irish Fusiliers Regimental Museum, Armagh
 Royal Mint Museum, Cardiff
 Rugby Art Gallery and Museum
 Russell-Cotes Museum, Bournemouth
 Rye Castle Museum
 Salford Art Gallery and Museum
 Scarborough Museums Service
 Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, Stratford-upon-Avon
 Southend Museum
 Spalding Gentlemen's Society Museum
 St Andrews Preservation Trust Museum
 Stirling Smith Art Gallery and Museum
 Stroud District Museum Service
 Tamworth Castle Museum
 The Atkinson, Southport
 The Collection, Lincoln
 The McManus, Dundee's Museum and Art Gallery
 Towneley Hall, Burnley
 Ulster Museum (National Museums Northern Ireland), Belfast

University of Nottingham Museum
 University of Warwick
 Ure Museum, University of Reading
 Victoria and Albert Museum
 Victoria Gallery and Museum, Liverpool
 Walsall Museums Service
 Warrington Freemasonry Museum
 Warrington Museum and Art Gallery
 Warwickshire Museum, Warwick
 Whitaker Art Gallery and Museum, Rawtenstall
 Williamson Art Gallery and Museum, Birkenhead

Wiltshire Museum, Devizes
 Winchester Museum
 Woburn Abbey
 Wolverhampton Art Gallery
 Worcester City Museum
 Worcestershire County Museum
 World Museum Liverpool (National Museums Liverpool)
 Worthing Museum
 Yorkshire Museum

List of partners and statistics correct October 2016.



Advice

Caring for museum numismatic collections and making use of them through display and outreach projects can present a number of challenges. The MMN provides practical advice and suggestions to help you with this work, taking inspiration from a wide range of numismatic projects all over the UK.

Housing

Good storage conditions are essential to any numismatic collection's longevity. It is important that research collections not in regular use are stored in dry conditions using specialist conservation-approved equipment to ensure their condition does not deteriorate. Large-scale storage projects can be expensive, but you can make simple cost-effective improvements by buying affordable equipment or adapting existing storage facilities. Through site visits and training, the MMN seeks to raise awareness of harmful storage materials and encourage their disposal and replacement with conservation grade equipment.

What to avoid

- Use of PVC envelopes
- Old manila envelopes
- Frayed or worn plastic bags
- Loose medals (metal-on-metal contact)
- Dissociated tickets/object information labels
- Use of non-conservation-grade storage vessels
- Bare shelf/tray bases

What to use

- Acid-free paper coin envelopes
- Conservation-grade storage boxes
- Document/archive pens for writing tickets/labels
- Inert foam
- Conservation-approved wooden, metal or plastic cabinets

Documentation

Proper documentation is essential for numismatics. Many museum objects are, at first glance, virtually identical so detailed catalogue entries can greatly aid their identification. If possible, include an image of each object in the database as this can also help to distinguish between objects that look similar.

Creating catalogue entries for numismatic objects

It is not always possible to create fully detailed records for numismatic objects, but even basic skeletal records are better than nothing at all. This is a handy checklist of what information is best to include if possible.

Coins

Registration number
Material (type of metal)
Obverse and reverse details, including inscriptions
Acquisition and provenance details
Location within museum (including storage or display)
Denomination
Diameter
Weight
Die-axis
Date of production
Mint mark
Findspot (for excavations and hoards)

Medals

Registration number
Material (type of metal)
Obverse and reverse details, including inscriptions
Acquisition and provenance details
Location within museum (including storage or display)
Diameter
Artist name
Production technique
Date of production or issue

Banknotes

Registration number
Material (e.g. paper or polymer)
Obverse and reverse details, including inscriptions
Acquisition and provenance details
Location within museum (including storage or display)
Dimensions
Serial number
Date of issue
Place of issue
Issuer

Terminology

Deciding which terminology to use to describe numismatic objects can be challenging. This is a handy glossary of some of the technical terms.

Blundered

An inscription which is wholly or partly illiterate, although it may be formed of letters which are individually legible.

Countermark

A secondary mark on a coin or banknote, usually produced with some kind of punch or stamp, indicating that it has an official status distinct from its original function, e.g. a coin of one currency countermarked with a value in another.

Die-axis

The alignment between the tops of the designs of the two faces of a coin or medal when it is flipped, reflecting the relative positions of the upper and lower die at the time of striking. This can be useful in distinguishing between two otherwise identical coins. Die-axis is normally expressed either in degrees or as times on a clock face.

Double-struck

A coin which has been struck twice, and has moved slightly between the two striking, so that there are two overlapping impressions from the dies visible on the coin.

Electrotype

A copy or replica, made by a process involving the electrolytic deposition of metal onto the surface.

Mint

A place where coins are manufactured. This may refer either to a specific workshop, or more generally to a town in which coins were produced.

Obverse

The front of the coin. This usually carried the name of the issuing authority or the more important design features. The obverse was usually struck from the lower die, which received less direct force during striking, and was therefore less susceptible to wear or distortion.

Reverse

The back of the coin, usually struck from the upper die.

Conservation

Conservation issues can occur with objects on display as well as in storage. Knowing how to spot signs of corrosion or what treatments to use can be challenging without access to conservation specialists. The following advice is mostly for coins, medals and other metal objects.

Storage tips

- Metal objects require different storage conditions from those made of paper and other materials. It is worth separating banknotes from the main numismatic collection and storing them elsewhere.
- For health and safety reasons, objects made of lead should be removed and stored separately, ideally in metal cabinets, in trays lined with @Plastazote and covered with charcoal cloth to absorb pollutants. A more cost-effective alternative would be to use inert plastic boxes to store lead objects.
- It is good practice to remove and store separately plastic objects such as bank cards that may out-gas. There should be good ventilation to allow the gases to disperse – a build-up exacerbates the problem.
- Archaeological metals should ideally be stored in conditions below 45% relative humidity. Fluctuations in temperature and relative humidity are often more likely to cause conservation issues than levels that are more extreme but constant.

Warning signs of corrosion

- Early signs of corrosion on a coin or medal include a fluffy or slimy appearance, or if it starts to smell.
- Crystal growth is an indication that verdigris or bronze disease may be setting in.
- Not all corrosion is bad – for example, dark green corrosion can be very stable.
- Fluffy, bright green crystals are a serious warning sign. If this type of corrosion visibly rubs off on your fingers, the crystal growth is new and therefore active.
- When checking shiny coins made of material like silver, turn them over to visually inspect both sides. If the underside is corroding more than the visible side, this could indicate unsuitable display or storage materials.

Display tips

- Objects on short-term display are less susceptible to conservation issues than those on long-term display.
- Avoid display board coverings made of velvets and felts.
- For details of fabrics that have been tested and are safe to use from a conservation perspective, email conservation@britishmuseum.org
- Display materials to be avoided include polystyrene, Styrofoam, foam rubber, wool, sticky tape and unknown or old cardboards.

Treatments to avoid

Certain treatments may cause lasting damage to objects. These include:

- Low humidity levels for banknotes (as they will dry out)
- Soaking in olive oil before drying it out in an oven
- Soaking in cola or ketchup
- Wiring up to a car battery
- Pebble polishers
- Liquid metal cleaners that may leave deposits in the object details (such as the image or inscription)
- Abrasives such as emery papers or scouring powder
- Ammonia
- Drain cleaners

Safe treatments

- Low humidity for metal objects will prevent most corrosion.
- Use silica gel for drying objects.
- Use Goddard's silver cloth for light polishing of silver.
- Use deionised water and litmus paper to stabilise coins with turquoise or white powdery corrosion.
- Soak the coins in water which should be changed every 30 minutes until litmus paper indicates it is neutral.
- Clean heavily corroded coins with a Walsh's finishing brush (a stiff bristle brush that is not made of metal).
- Use toothbrushes for wet, light cleaning (aided with magnification and a straking light across the surface).

For more detailed advice, visit finds.org.uk

More information

MMN training offers detailed talks on conservation. If in doubt, seek the help of a museum that may have a conservation department. For a list of conservation specialists in your area, visit conservationregister.com

Display

Displaying numismatic objects in ways that are innovative and engaging is a constant challenge. The perception that objects like coins are small and tricky to display can be discouraging, but there are options to display them well. Through training talks and practical demonstrations, the MMN seeks to inspire participants to put more of their numismatic collections on public display. The following section includes suggested equipment for numismatic displays, ideas for layouts and general advice.

Equipment

You should choose equipment for displays that is likely to be conservation safe. Objects must be protected from materials that are likely to be harmful in any way. For example, wooden display panels can be wrapped in Moistop to prevent off-gassing and metal pins can be coated in inert plastic tubing to reduce the chances of corrosion caused by metal-on-metal contact. Conservation-approved materials used regularly by many museums for numismatics include:

- Ultralight MDF (less dense than regular MDF and easier to pin into)
- Moistop
- Conservation-tested fabric
- Steel pins
- Catheter tubing
- Perspex

Layouts

Careful planning of layouts can help to maximise the impact of numismatic displays. For example, displaying too many coins can be off-putting to visitors. Many coins and medals are small, and it can be hard to see the details, especially behind glass. You can bring out details in a variety of ways, including in-case magnification, enlarged photos and digital technology.

Numismatic material can function well on its own, but it can also be used alongside other material to illustrate a wide variety of subjects. These could include individual artists, local history or symbols of authority, or could provide a dating framework for other objects, or illustrate archaeological discoveries from a particular area.

Accessibility

In order to comply with the Equality Act 2010 and to provide the best experience for visitors, ensure that displays are accessible to everyone. Consider how visitors with access needs, such as blind or partially sighted people, people who are deaf or hard of hearing, people with learning disabilities or wheelchair users may experience your display. Key areas for consideration are the height of cases, objects and labels; the amount, legibility, colour contrast and font size of text (avoid text over patterns or images); the contrast on maps and timelines; lighting and opportunities for touch.

Lighting

Coins and medals are often beautifully detailed and to show them at their best, good lighting is essential. You can highlight individual objects with a single spotlight. You can help bring out the detail on groups of objects by angling lights across the surface and using shadow. Different types of objects respond to lighting in different ways, both in terms of visual effect and conservation needs. For example, a banknote may require very different lighting from a gold coin. Carefully plan the lighting implications of what goes where in a case. You can also make the display more visually appealing and easier to interpret by having fewer objects per panel.

Object handling

Think about using handling desks in galleries. By allowing visitors to hold objects in their hands, they can get closer to objects that might otherwise be behind glass. Every visitor can benefit from this contact, greatly enhancing the visitor experience.

Education and outreach

Numismatic objects lend themselves to use in outreach and engagement projects. They are popular in education sessions and can be used to engage with different groups and local communities. This may involve taking objects from handling or research collections to public spaces or off-site locations. Making sure that numismatic displays are accessible to all is an important part of museum work, as is making research collections available in secure study facilities. This section will provide you with inspiration to make greater use of your collection with ideas from other organisations and guidance on making the objects accessible to the public.

Education

Museum numismatic objects can play an important part in children's lives through education projects, from an academic approach to practical, hands-on activities such as object handling sessions and coin striking demonstrations.

Museum-based education projects can offer a free learning experience that links directly with the National Curriculum Key Stages 3–5. A prime example of this is the Citi Money Gallery Education Programme at the British Museum, which encourages children to learn about monetary and financial concepts within a historical context.

The Harris Museum & Art Gallery produced education resources to give ideas and inspiration to people wanting to use numismatic objects with school groups. The resource shares ideas for creative learning using numismatic collections, featuring examples from the north-west of England. It is available on the Museum Development North West website.

Outreach

Numismatic objects, especially coins, are ideal for use in local community outreach projects. The use of money is something that unites people, and can lead to many ideas for outreach and engagement work. Representatives from York Museums Trust, Museum Development North West and National Museums Liverpool have all contributed to MMN training events. This raises awareness of their outreach projects and inspires people from other museums to make more use of their own collections.

- York Museums Trust make objects from their collection accessible to different communities and groups. They have worked with trainee hairdressers to recreate Roman hairstyles based on coin portraiture. They also bring coin hoards back to the areas they were found in, allowing local people to reconnect with them.
- Museum Development North West employed a consultant to visit key museums to provide in-depth assessments of their numismatic collections. The participating museums were encouraged to make more of their collections through exhibitions, new interpretation of existing displays and outreach.
- National Museums Liverpool's 'My House of Memories' app engages with people living with dementia, and their carers, through museum objects. The app includes a selection of numismatic objects intended to prompt the sharing of memories, such as coins, money boxes and phone cards. These were chosen in consultation with the British Museum.

Security

The size and portability of numismatic objects, especially coins, makes them vulnerable to theft, loss and substitution. Here is some advice on security considerations with numismatic collections.

Storage

- Like all portable objects of high value, store numismatic objects in lockable cabinets inside lockable, alarmed storage facilities or offices.
- Restrict access to the keys to storage areas to a small number of staff.
- Supervise volunteers or students working in numismatic collection stores at all times.
- When storing objects in trays, fill all empty holes with a token or indicator to show that it is supposed to be an empty space and that nothing has gone missing.
- When taking an object out of storage, put an 'object removed' ticket or slip in its place stating where the object has gone, who took it, when and for what purpose.
- Also update the object's location information in its catalogue or spreadsheet. This means the object's location can be easily traced, which is important if it has been out of storage for a long time or if there have been staff changes.

Display

Security of the objects is paramount when it comes to deciding on display layouts. This is particularly important for coins as they can be small enough to slip through gaps, and (because they are mass produced) may be difficult to identify with certainty once stolen, even if they are recovered.

Detailed advice can be obtained from the National Security Advisor, but you should try and use:

- Impact resistant/shatterproof glass
- Effective alarms, including in-case vibration-sensitive alarms
- Invigilation or CCTV

Make sure all joints in the case are solidly bonded, or protected by metal flanges rather than relying on sealant. However, if there are gaps anywhere in the structure of the showcase then pin small objects securely to the panel or case base within, ideally as far from those gaps as possible.

Study facilities

Making museum objects directly accessible to the public for research purposes is an important part of any institution's public service, but presents unique challenges.

- Visitors looking at objects in study rooms must be supervised at all times, ideally in a lockable room.
- Restrict the number of visitors to the study room for security of the objects. With one invigilator, no more than three people at any one time should have access to numismatic objects.
- Visitors' bags should be left outside the study area.
- Where possible, use CCTV to monitor the study room.
- Count objects before issuing them to visitors.
- When visitors have finished, count the objects back in again.
- Ideally film or photograph trays of objects both before and after they are issued.
- Restrict the number of objects available to an individual at any one time – e.g. no more than two trays of coins at a time issued to one visitor.
- Visitors must wear gloves, especially for vulnerable objects like medals, proof coins and banknotes.
- Magnifying glasses, weighing scales and callipers should be available on request.
- Visitors wishing to compare their own objects to examples in a museum collection present extra security issues. Ideally, take a high quality image of the visitor's objects by the study room invigilator. The visitor should hold their object next to the museum examples in the tray and cannot have both side by side on a table or in their hand.
- Keep a written record of everything each visitor has looked at during the session, including object numbers, on an official study room form.

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Contacts

For more information about the Money and Medals Network, visit moneyandmedals.org.uk

Follow [@moneymedalsnet](https://twitter.com/moneymedalsnet) on Twitter.

For more information about the collections mapping project and for details of how to participate, email mmn@britishmuseum.org

To subscribe to the newsletter, email newsletter@moneyandmedals.org.uk with 'SUBSCRIBE' in the subject line.

To submit items to the newsletter, email newsletter@moneyandmedals.org.uk

For general numismatic enquiries, email coins@britishmuseum.org

To find out more about the other Subject Specialist Networks in the UK, search for 'subject specialist networks' at artscouncil.org.uk

Front cover captions

Reverse of a silver medal showing a view of Windsor Castle. Designed by Percy Metcalfe, and struck to commemorate the Silver Jubilee of George V in 1935.

Gold *aureus* coin of Carausius, a Roman emperor who ruled Britain and parts of Gaul. Minted in London, AD 286–293. Found as part of the Ashbourne Hoard in Derbyshire in 2007.

Large image captions

Modern forger's mould of a shekel of the First Jewish Revolt. © Alan Fletcher/ashotinthedark.

Coins from UN member states on display in the British Museum's Citi Money Gallery.

Attendees at a Money and Medals South West training day at Bristol Museum and Art Gallery. © Mark Simmons Photography.

Numismatic object pinning technique training at a Money and Medals South West training day at Bristol Museum and Art Gallery. © Mark Simmons Photography.

