

Jane Austen's House Museum Research Resources

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The Accessioned Collection

Jane Austen's House Museum's accessioned collection is made up of approximately 700 objects including manuscripts, books, furniture, jewellery, paintings, ceramics, and textiles. Objects in the collection date from as early as the seventeenth century to as late as the twenty-first century, but the majority of objects date to the late eighteenth century and nineteenth century.

Jane Austen's House Museum has four strands to its collection:

1. Items directly associated with Jane Austen and her close circle
 2. Items associated with Jane Austen's social circle and her brothers' descendants
 3. Items associated with the Austen industry
 4. Period furnishings and set dressing
1. Objects in the first category include manuscript letters and music books, a small writing table, jewellery and other objects owned by Jane Austen, a patchwork coverlet, furniture from Austen's childhood home, first edition books with family provenance, and a donkey carriage. They also include personal possessions of Jane Austen's immediate family, including hand written items, furniture and paintings.
 2. Objects in the second category include jewellery, clothing accessories (e.g. mitts and baby bonnets), drawings, and furniture. These objects mainly date to the mid- to late nineteenth century.
 3. Objects in the third category include further early editions of Jane Austen's novels, late nineteenth-century illustrations from Austen's novels, costume designs and other paraphernalia from theatre adaptations of the novels, and some late twentieth/early twenty-first century items relating to the Austen industry (e.g. film memorabilia from adaptations of the novels).
 4. Objects in the fourth category include pieces of furniture and accessories (e.g. kitchen items) from the late eighteenth and nineteenth century (some are early twentieth century) and are used to furnish the house museum in order to present a middle-class Regency home to visitors.

In recent years, parts of the collection have been digitized and publicized online: the Austen family music books are catalogued on the Internet Archive website

<https://archive.org/details/austenfamilymusicbooks>, while the manuscript letters are catalogued as archive '28A11' in the Hampshire Archive and Local Studies catalogue <http://calm.hants.gov.uk/> where they are physically held on deposit. Certain collection highlights are featured on our own website within our '41 Objects' pages and the 'Learning Education Packs' pages.

The entire accessioned collection is catalogued on the MODES database system. The standard of individual records is constantly improving and as collections research is undertaken, we are making many corrections (particularly to date fields, provenance fields and terms of entry).

Unfortunately, the documentation is not yet of a standard where the catalogue as a whole can be made accessible to the public online. Researchers must therefore ask staff to search for objects or areas of interest.

Other Resources

The Museum's research resources extend beyond the accessioned collection described above. They also include the following non-accessioned collections:

A. Reference Library

B. Museum Archive

C. Archaeological Collection

D. Handling Collection

- A. The Museum holds a reference library of books related to Jane Austen including foreign translations and early and modern academic writing about Austen. This library does not form part of the museum's accessioned collection. These books are accessible to museum staff and volunteers, general visitors, and researchers. However the catalogue is not available online.
- B. The Museum owns an archive documenting its foundation and development over the past 70 years. This consists of manuscripts, printed papers, photographs, press cuttings, visitor books and ephemera. The archive has been sorted at a basic level (ie. by material type, and by date) but is not yet catalogued.
- C. The Museum owns 300 garden finds which have been discovered by the Museum gardener over the last twenty years. These finds are being catalogued in Excel by a team of trained volunteers. This is helping the Museum to build a better picture of the site's history, including the period of Jane Austen's residence, and are to be used to inform the interpretation of the house.
- D. The Museum owns a handling collection, which again does not form part of its accessioned collection. Items in the handling collection do not fit within the collections policy as they have no association with Jane Austen and may date to a later period than the museum's collection represents. They are also purchased with the express purpose of being handled by visitors. This collection is managed by the Learning Officer and is utilised for learning and extended access activities. Handling collection items are kept completely separate-from objects in the accessioned collection. They are listed in an inventory.