

Top Tips for Undertaking a Significance Assessment

These top tips have come from individuals based in libraries and museums in the south Wales area who have undertaken a significance assessment.

- Don't choose too large a collection to start with, start small
- Understand why you are using the kit
- Be flexible in your approach
- Share your experience and pain with others
- Don't limit its use to just collections review, can reinforce acquisitions procedures and decisions.
- Work within your limits (Time, Volunteers, other resources)
- Involve specialists early
- Don't be afraid to adapt toolkit if necessary
- Apply the outcomes
- Don't be afraid to highlight gaps where further information is needed
- Make it work for you
- Use it to promote Museum/Archive/Library to your collection
- Use it as a tool to reject things – can justify it
- Use it to work with partners

First hand experiences of using the toolkit

This is what two museums said about their experience of using the toolkit.

Carmarthenshire County Museum

I found the tool very useful for assessing this collection; not least because it requires you to be systematic in your approach and to look at the objects and collections objectively. We also used the toolkit to assess whole collections, such as archaeology and art, when we were carrying out our service review. Again this allowed us to be systematic but it was more of a broad brush approach but it did enable us to make an assessment of the collections and which assisted in making a case for the importance of the collections.

Cardiff Story

At the Cardiff Story Museum we tested using the significance assessment as part of our documentation process. As we were accessioning new items into the collection we assigned a significance using the toolkit and then recorded that in our cataloguing system. It worked well but we found that most objects were coming out as a 4A or 4B because we are a local history museum and all we take in has local significance. In the future we are thinking of creating sub-criteria to allow the significance assessment to be useful to us in the museum as well as the rest of the sector in Wales. We hope the sub-criteria would allow us to rank how significant the objects are to Cardiff rather than just stating that they are locally significant.