

Study Name: How do ethics influence the development of policies for accessing public collections which are essentially restricted by law: A case study of the Royal Armouries.

Depositor: Stuart Bowes

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Interview Transcript: Katie Robson – Registrar (Royal Armouries), 1/4/2022

SB: Excellent. To begin with, what's your name please?

KR: It's Katie Robson.

SB: Wonderful, and what's your current role title?

KR: Registrar.

SB: When did you start working in this position at the Armouries?

KR: I started at the end of October 2017, [the] last week.

SB: Yes. Am I right in thinking that this is your first and only position at the Armouries?

KR: Yeah, that's right.

SB: Excellent. What would you say your primary responsibilities in the role?

KR: It's quite hard to pin things down, actually. I was having to think about this. A few things come to mind, really. Managing the loans programme, acquisitions, disposals, and all the intricacies of those, so that's one strand. Line management is a big part of my role, and the different things that that include. There's three strands to that: documentation; the technicians and the displays, and all the things they do; and then the registrar strand with the Assistant Registrar and the Trainee Registrar. So that's a big part. It's also a lot of advising colleagues, that's a huge part of my job. Largely in the collections team, but actually, the whole organisation as well, so that's a big chunk. Managing risk, in terms of the collection, to the collection, from the collection. Managing procedures, so checking if the procedures work. Are people following them? Other things that need changing, rewriting the procedures. They're the key things that I think of as absolutely core, and then there's lots of detail within those. But I think for me, that's my concept.

SB: Yes, thank you for that. A lot of these things hopefully we'll be touching on throughout the rest of the conversation. To move on to the main body of questions, what would you consider to be the principal restrictions placed on the Armouries' weapons collections in particular by frameworks designed to regulate museum practice?

KR: Break that down a bit, what frameworks regulate museum practice?

SB: I'm thinking of things like the Museum Accreditation Scheme, the PAS 197 Code [of Practice] for Cultural Collections Management, Spectrum, and the Government Indemnity Scheme. All of those regulations issued from within the sector and incorporating museum governance and standards of practice.

KR: Okay. When you say weapons collections, do you want me to focus on that as opposed to the non-weapons that we have in the collection?

SB: I think anything that applies to the weapons collections. It doesn't have to be specific to them, but obviously it's interesting to know where it differs from the regular collections.

KR: Yeah, I find this a really hard question because I don't see it as restrictions, in a way. I see it as more enabling things we should be doing, things that are good. I'm finding it quite hard to think, probably the best way is to think about each framework.

SB: Yeah, of course. The first one that's on my list of questions and probably one of the most prominent ones is the Museum Accreditation scheme. What would you think are the responsibilities that it places on the Armouries, and specifically on its weapons collections?

KR: Yeah. I guess it's interesting for me because all these frameworks are really embedded, we do them without thinking. Now we don't think about the frameworks, if you know what I mean, because they are reflected in everything we do and they run through it, all of these. We just get on with it, so only when we do the accreditation return, then we really focus on the questions. Let me just go and pull up the website, I was having a look at it yesterday. Actually, I'm on Collections Trust and I don't really want that.

SB: I suppose that is part of the fun of it, that they're all interlinked together and they're all feeding into one another, and it's hard to separate them out in quite a distinct way.

KR: I'm nearly there. I just want to get into the nitty gritty. The first bit, organisational health, having appropriate governance and management, planning ahead so you've got resources to deliver your plan, managing risk. It's a really good structure and it is what we have, but I don't really know how it restricts use of the collections.

SB: Yes, so again it's this idea it's enabling rather than restricting. Is that what you're getting at?

KR: I guess so. Yeah, it seems quite a good structure. It will be interesting to see what Jen [Kaines, Head of Collections Services] and Laura [Bell, Director of Collections], those different two levels above me in the hierarchy, whether they've got a different perception of it. But can you rephrase the question?

SB: Yeah, of course. I know it does have that idea about risk, I think it's in the third chapter of the accreditation standards. How would the Armouries go about managing its weapons collections in line with those provisions that it says?

KR: In terms of the collection, there's always an onion. There's this onion model of security really, so there's meant to be layers in place to protect it. It's the same for any [collection]. Thinking about this, everything we do with the weapons, or the majority of what we do for the weapons, we would want to do for non-weapons, you just want to do it for the collection really. But there are then some additional steps we have to take with weapons. For Section 5s [firearms prohibited under the *Firearms Act 1968*], you might have a more secure door. You might go a bit higher specification in the physical nature of the building and the security. But often the other non-weapons collections, you would have those as well.

SB: Are those provided for in the text of the accreditation itself, or is that something that the Armouries introduces on its own? From its own perspective, from its own needs.

KR: It's interesting because out of those frameworks you've mentioned, PAS [197] is really high level that gives us an extremely useful framework. That is our collections framework. Our policy framework totally mirrors PAS, and that tells us everything we need in our four major policy documents. But they're very broad and they're very high level. They're very broad statements and I think you'd want to see those statements in reference to any collections. We don't get into any specifics in terms of powers. We do acknowledge that it is perhaps a little bit harder to grant access to weapons. But in practice, when we have visitors, we can't allow prohibited persons to view weapons. That's a very specific weapons related thing and that's to make sure we follow the *Firearms Act* [1968], so that's a definite specific weapons thing. We do say that people who are under 18, they should be supervised, and under 14 we can't show them the collection and behind the scenes. But that's an interesting question I think, as to whether are we saying that because of weapons or would we want to say that with non-weapons? Because we don't say that explicitly, actually. It's something I'm thinking about now, I'd like to review it really. I think the

implication is we say that due to them being weapons, but actually, should that just be the case for the collection or not? What do other institutions do? So that's something I've got on my list to look at. I think we say it because of the weapons, but we've not said that explicitly in our documents.

SB: So it's not in any of the policy documents or on the website or anything?

KR: It's on the policy documents in terms of the age, what we don't specify is the reason. So we say, I think it's in our collections access [policy] – which all comes from PAS – it says clearly if you're under 18, must have an adult, and under 14, can't show you the collection and it does mention it next to the prohibited persons line. I think the implication that is because it's due to the weapons collection, but, as I say, it's not explicit whether it is or not. I think it's an interesting little gap that we maybe need to look at and just ask ourselves.

SB: I was just thinking, is that something that's contained in a framework like PAS? The fact that maybe more sensitive collections need that extra source of regulation. Or again, is it something that there's a basic level, and then the Armouries knows that it's its duty to go beyond that? Is it more of a proactive thing rather than a reactive?

KR: Yeah, I think so. Because I think generally in the frameworks, the specifics that are mentioned I think tend to be human remains. Human remains might be mentioned, possibly hazards. Weapons is a bit of a gap, it's not really explicit. I mean it's quite hard for me to answer because I have to refer to them as documents, so I don't want to misquote them because I have them contained in my head.

SB: That would be very impressive.

KR: Yeah, I wish I did. It would be so useful, to be able to consult them. But my feeling is that weapons aren't mentioned really in any of these frameworks. What is mentioned is you will be legally compliant, so obviously these frameworks cover it in the broad sense, but then there's so many different potential legal things you've got to comply with. It's down to the individual collections to then, as you say, be proactive and make sure they're doing it and that's what I think we do in terms of the weapons. It's not covered in a specific way in these frameworks. I'm just wondering because I've got PAS actually and it's great in that it lists all these specific documents that you could refer to. But I don't think it has anything weapons related.

SB: That's certainly the impression that I've got, looking through the literature and speaking to people like Jen and Laura, is that very much the legislation is there, this museum guidance is there, but there's nothing bringing them together. Nothing official, at least, and it's the Museum that is working out these problems on the ground.

KR: Yeah, that's definitely my feeling. I'd say PAS totally mirrors our policy framework and that runs through everything we do with the weapons collections, but it doesn't give us the specifics. Spectrum and Accreditation, the same really. They give us all our bread-and-butter procedures and everything we do, and we try and work to those standards. But yeah, they don't really give us anything specific. As you say, it's down to us to work that out. The one that's a bit of an odd one out I think is the GIS [Government Indemnity Scheme]. But again, if you look at the document, if you look at the GI guidelines, I don't think weapons are mentioned at all.

SB: Not that I've seen.

KR: But then weapons are mentioned in our conversations with the National Security Adviser. So I think out of all the frameworks you've mentioned, the one that is different is the GI and how we use that and it would probably good for me to share some detail on that because that is where we do get into specific comments about weapons. Whereas the others we just don't and it's down to us. But I think that probably answers a later question. Do you want me to go into GI now?

SB: Yes, that would be really interesting. We could always come back to this and the other bits later.

KR: Yeah, so thinking really about loans, I guess it touches on loans more. In terms of weapons for loans, I think I'll probably find it easier to think about loans really. If somebody wants to borrow a weapon, not an antique, but one subject to regulation, Section whatever [of the *Firearms Act* 1968], and we do get requests for Section 5s, so it's down to us to make sure they've got the right licence. Do they have a Museum Firearms Licence? That's something specific to the weapons collection, and it's down to us to make sure they've got that. It is an interesting interaction because we're working with the Home Office. Yes, we've got all these things you mentioned there, the collection management museum stuff, but what we've got to bring in and marry it with Home Office, police, all the things to do with the weapons in a practical sense and our licences. I suppose it's more when we're doing those weapons loans, it's

more checks and balances we've got to put in. As I say, lending out, have they got the Licence? If they have got the Licence that gives us a lot because we know that they've been assessed by the police, it ticks a lot of boxes, it should be fine in terms of security. Then we just get into what we normally do about the display case itself, but that we would do whether it was a weapon or not, really. We'd want a GI-standard display case either way, so we don't alter our case specification depending on whether it's a weapon or not. We've got a high spec for both of those. What is interesting is, we also have to submit all our loans out to the National Security Adviser at the Arts Council and he will assess the venue. What we do is we send the UKRG [UK Registrars Group] Facilities Report, Security Supplement, Display Case Supplement, those three documents. We ask the venue to complete them. That gives us lots of information that we can assess and we also then send that off to the NSA [National Security Adviser], and he will do an assessment of the venue. He's got a database, he'll visit or he'll send somebody to visit and do an in-person assessment if they've not been before and he'll be doing a holistic, really specific assessment. With all these, it's always case by case because if it's on a remote Scottish island where the crime rate is low versus in the heart of London. He's really doing a very specific venue assessment, looking at all the features of the building itself, security, also the environment, is it a flood risk? A full assessment with his intelligence and his knowledge, he'll do a really specific one. He'll also look at what objects we're sending, so we have to submit those. The GI guideline is specific about, if things are small and portable.

SB: So something like a handgun, in that case?

KR: Well, or is it? Because I think of coins, but it could be a handgun. But again, the thing with these guidelines, I think they're quite open to interpretation. We don't get measurements, so it's left to us to interpret the guidelines. I think they were written probably for more art collections because there's talk about unglazed paintings, you need a metre barrier. There are some specifics in there, but not relating to weapons, so that's the guidelines. But what he'll do on his individual assessment that he sends back to us, I have had assessments back from him where he will say, where we're lending an antique even, and he will say this should be cable tied. This firearm should be tied within the display case. Now it doesn't say that anywhere that I've seen, I've never seen any rule or guidance on that. It just doesn't say it in the GI guidelines. That's his specific recommendation based on the individual case, and who am I to argue with that? Because

he's the National Security Advisor. Then we ask that of the venue or we'll make that happen, our technicians will make something that fulfils that requirement.

SB: Something that Laura said to me was that there was an alternative found because the cabling down limited the interpretation and the display. Do you know what solution was found for that?

KR: No, I'm interested to know. All I know is that when the National Security Advisor visited us and did a walk round with us, he expressed a preference that our firearms would be tied in some way. That was it. The conversations must have happened prior to me starting in post in 2017, as to why none of the collection is [cabled]. I think he referenced IWM [Imperial War Museum], for example, that does have some of those measures in place. I'm not party to that, I've not seen anything documented about that, so it would be really interesting to know what conversations were had about that before I started.

SB: I've seen in the Firearm Security Handbook issued by the Home Office. The guidance I think is in there suggesting that you should cable down weapons on display. I think that's the source of it. But I was just interested, just about the checklist that the National Security Advisor goes through. Do you know if that's based on any particular framework or is that something that's been developed specifically for each particular loan, specifically firearms loans?

KR: Yeah, I know he does a very case by case assessment. What I'm not clear on is, will his preference, regardless of where it is, will he say you need to tie these? Or is that a specific thing that the venue might not have 24-hour security? I'm not clear on that. All I know is that we send him the information and he comes back with a recommendation, and that's it. It's a mysterious process really, there's nothing else written down about that. I'm just trying to think about the [loans] outs and other weapons things. There's obviously transport, so we do go further when we're transporting weapons. If it's Section 5, we have to make sure we use a Section 5 transport agent. That's something we have to do specifically. A lot of the same rules apply, so we would never want to leave any collection objects unattended anyway. You definitely wouldn't want to do it with weapons, but we don't want to do it with anything really. The funny thing is, for me, when I speak to the Home Office or the police, they've obviously got a very different angle on it. They're not coming from the museum perspective, but actually, what we do, all these collection frameworks that you've mentioned, what we do for the collection is a really high standard

anyway, so that actually covers what we need to do for the weapons because museum professionals want to do that for any collection objects.

SB: It's a really interesting perspective that, in that you're not actually having to do anything extra because the general standards are so high. That's an interesting point.

KR: That's my perception, but whether that's correct or not it's quite hard to say. There's not loads written really that we have subscribed to, which obviously gives us flexibility. Whether we'd want more written, I don't know, because it's all about risk assessments and dynamic risk assessments. The other interesting [thing] we've had recently with the Home Office with the terms of our licence is we want to lend Section 5 to another venue, are we able to do that or not? The wording on the licence is about transferring. It was agreed that we would contact the Home Office, so it's another step that I need to put into the loan out procedure. What I have done is if we are lending that we obtain approval of the Home Office, but it's a bit unclear. Again, there isn't really a written procedure, it's something we've discussed with them. That's quite challenging really, not having any definites.

SB: Yes. It's having to assess it on that case-by-case basis and that takes time.

KR: Yeah, but also just not knowing. It's a bit precarious because if we're planning a loan out, we go through all our process, but I don't know when I'll hear back from the Security Advisor. I don't know when I'll hear back from the Home Office. What if they say no? It's a little bit precarious and a bit hard to plan for because there's no set timescale or there's no procedure with the Home Office.

SB: I suppose the only way around that is to try and do it as early as possible to give you the time for the correspondence.

KR: Yeah, you can do that. The only thing with Security Advisor is they assess them in the order that the loans are going out. So even if I sent something three years in advance, he will look at all the ones that are going out before then before he gets to mine. I can see why he does that because they will be covering all the nationals [museums] in the country and working with non-nationals [museums], so the volume of work for them is immense really. I can see why they do that, but it's a challenge from our perspective. I'm trying to think about other things with GI. It's a

slippery subject, it's not black and white. I think that's the crux of it, it's quite hard to get a handle on it in a way.

SB: Are there any examples where there's been a loan that's been particularly difficult, specifically in relation to weapons collections?

KR: I mean we've had some we've just had to say no, the straightforward ones. It's a shame because in terms of these frameworks, we say – I'm trying to think which policy document we say it in whether it's access – we will try and fulfil loan requests, that's what we want to do. Unless there's a good reason not to. We want to fulfil the loan request. Obviously a good reason not to is they haven't got a licence, so we can't do it. But that's a shame. With some it's unfortunate, we'd love to work with the venue, it would be a nice loan to do, but the fact is they haven't got a licence. Or they may be able to get a licence, but there isn't enough time for them. Because of the intricacies of this, people don't always know that. If they knew that, they might have applied further in advance. So that's a bit of a barrier really, I suppose for them, that this info isn't readily available, you've got to really hunt for it. That's something we can do, as our national remit, is really make sure we specify that in our guide to borrowing. I think that's something we need to do, when we do our next redraft, is be really more explicit about that with the licences. We've had some where it's a real shame, it's a direct no, and also some where they're waiting, they've applied for the licence, but again, they don't know when they'll get it. So that's a bit of a challenge for both parties. I'm trying to think if we've had any others, with weapons. I think generally if they've got the licence, they've already gone a long way to fulfilling the criteria.

SB: I suppose if you're fulfilling the legal criteria, you're generally fulfilling the museological criteria as well.

KR: Yeah, that's right. I can't think of any other issues there. I mean it is complicated with international loans and I find that very challenging with licensors when it's weapons. We appoint transport agents to be the experts for customs and licences, but they're not working with weapons regularly. They can't always advise, we all have to check, it depends what country we're working with, so there's added layers. It's quite complicated just if something is not a weapon to legally transport it and make sure everything is correct with customs and licences. Add in a weapon, and then you get another raft of knowing whether it's correct import and

export. That does actually add quite a challenge for our acquisitions, obviously a lot of acquisitions will be weapons, they're the ones we want. A majority, I guess it's fair to say, [it'd] be interesting to see the stats actually, how many weapons and how many aren't. But it is challenging. We've got weapons that we want to acquire, we've got weapons that people are very kindly donating to us free of charge. The challenge is can we transport them. We've had a donor free of charge wanted to donate some edged weapons, we wanted them. As it stands, we've not been able to proceed because it's so challenging to try and transport these. Nobody wants to transport edged weapons. None of the couriers want to go near it, even though they've done it before. There's two layers of agent, really, so I'm not talking about the fine art shippers. The fine art shippers, I've not been able to ask them because the cost would be prohibitive, so we've done an assessment for this particular object, we can't justify spending thousands [of pounds] of public money to use a shipper. I've looked at other layers down, so that would be more like couriers like DHL, and we're just not able to proceed because it's just very complicated. Again, often if you're using things like flights to transport things, ultimately in the small print it will be at the discretion of the pilot what they are allow on the plane. So we could as much planning and everything as possible, but the fact is they might not want it on the plane, so it's precarious. I suppose that's the thing with weapons, there's always factors like that, so it's hard to mitigate against those. The best thing we can do to mitigate is when we use a specialist agent and they've got relationships with staff at the airport and the companies, so they do everything they can to mitigate the risk. But ultimately, people aren't keen, understandably, on having weapons on their mode of transport. So that's actually quite a challenge for acquisitions and transporting weapons internationally is difficult.

SB: Well, I suppose there aren't really any frameworks in place to regulate that.

KR: For us, it's the Department for Trade actually. Again, it's an interesting one where the museum culture rubs up against the weapons legislation, in a way. We have to go through Arts Council with our cultural hat on. We're working through Arts Council, and they signpost what you need and they issue cultural licenses, as it were. However, they do know that if it's a weapon, you'll need to speak to *this* government department. We know who we might need to speak to from the UK side, the Department for Trade. But dependent on the country we're

working with, every country might have its own different rules and regulations, so navigating that's quite a challenge.

SB: Yeah, I can imagine. 200-odd countries around the world. That's all been really interesting. Thank you. I've got a much better picture of the mechanics of that now, so thank you very much. I was just picking up on a point that you mentioned earlier, the idea that there isn't really any guidance about weapons in museum collections. Do you think that there should be in one place, and if so, what form should this take? Do you think it should be compulsory or administered through something like accreditation? Or do you think it should be more an advisory guidance that can perhaps be backed up through the more consensual methods, I suppose?

KR: Yeah, it's a good question. The only things that I'm aware of is the [Firearms Security] Handbook which you've mentioned and it's nice that museums are mentioned in the *Firearms Act* [1968]. So there's those small amounts of text that you can refer to. I think we should have a guide. It's a tricky one because authority gets delegated to different police forces even. Even within the UK, one police force might make a different decision to another, so that's where it gets tricky. If we had a document and we said you've got to comply with this, it gets messy with who is in charge of that, because ultimately, as it stands, people have to be answerable to their own licencing officers. So it'd be quite hard if it was linked to accreditation or one of the cultural things, how that then interacts with enforcement by the police. So I think a guide, I think recommendation is probably safer than compliance. I think that would be really valuable for the museum sector because we do get lots of inquiries from a range of collections, asking advice about weapons display, all manner of them, storage. I think it would be really good to have something, but the tricky thing is it's got to be a bit case by case. It's that balance of not stepping on the toes of the licensing officer and being really careful because venues are going to be so different and have different risks. We can't let people think if they do this, then they're covered, they're fine, and they've ticked the boxes, because that might not be the case. Venues will have different security features. But I think there is a big need to have something, to have some document to even signpost. I think there's a real gap. To even put down sources: there is this handbook, you can speak to the National Security Advisor, you should speak to your local licensing officer. I think that it would be good to have that embedded somewhere.

SB: Yes. You touched on a few areas, but what do you think it should address in relation to weapons collections? What processes and procedures?

KR: I mean the thing would be looking at Spectrum because Spectrum contains in it really everything we do. You could insert that into a lot of Spectrum procedures, transport, everything in Spectrum. Some of them are not as relevant, but I'm just thinking through, so really you could work through the primary procedures. Loans in and out, how does that relate to weapons? Storage, how does it relate to weapons? Transport. Inventory control, you're obliged to know where all your weapons are, just the same as any collection, but it would be nice to have guidance about, have you got the serial number? You could make some specific guidance to weapons. I'm just focusing on firearms, but plenty of other weapons. But you could really go through each of the primary Spectrum [procedures], and that would go a long way to covering it. Just thinking about display specification though, because that's a gap. I don't think that would necessarily cover it, so then you'd be looking at the GI guidelines. It would be nice to see a section in there on weapons. But again, it's a bit of a challenge that, because do we want to go down the route of a standard or not? There's pros and cons with it.

SB: Yeah, it's trying to find that balance. Something that's proportional to each individual institution, that's detailed enough to be useful, but not too detailed that it doesn't apply in every case.

KR: Yeah, it is surprising really. I've worked in it a bit now, but I was surprised when I started because I hadn't worked with weapons collections before, particularly. But there just is a void of information. There's little snippets. I think there was something possibly published on Collections Trust with support from IWM. I remember when I was looking before my interview, there was a little nugget of a guide about weapons collections.

SB: Yes, I think I've seen that, but I think it's about 10 years old now.

KR: Yeah, I think it's a big gap and I think it would be very helpful for the sector to have something in there.

SB: How do you think this would link up with the legislation on it? Because obviously this is the source of most of the regulations. Do you think the best way would be to marry the legislation with the museological frameworks and create something from there?

KR: It's really hard, isn't it? That's a good question. The problem is if things alter, things, it's vital that things are kept up to date. It is a difficult, it is a conundrum that really. They're very different departments, they're all government, you've got Home Office, you've got Arts Council, and it would be great if they could link up at that level. In practice, I think that's quite hard.

SB: They've got different priorities and it's trying to reconcile them.

KR: I think we've got in-house expertise and that's what happens at the minute. We've got people that know the legislation inside-out. For me, it's the firearms curators who I consult a lot. They've got an absolute grip and are up to date on the legislation, but they also know the cultural side, so a lot falls to them. There's the Museums Weapons Group, which has been dormant, I think it's fair to say. In reality, it's got to be through those mechanisms and it's probably something we lead on, we're the experts on and we join the two. I think probably that's how it has to happen and that's how it happens at the moment.

SB: Quite an ad-hoc basis?

KR: Yeah. The way I could see it happening is probably us or ideally the Museums Weapons Group because it's not just us, there's lots of other collections that have got weapons, there is quite a group there. So ideally, we'd all get together and we would make that link and speak to Accreditation and try and get things in there. That's how I could probably see it happening in practice, which would be quite a project. But I think it would be a fruitful one.

SB: No I definitely agree, given that I've been looking at these frameworks and the legislation and trying to puzzle it all together for the past 18 months now, and I'm getting there.

KR: It could be a job for you after.

SB: Well if someone is going to pay me to do it, I'd happily keep going. But yes, thank you for your thoughts on that. It's been really interesting. One of the benefits about setting it down somewhere is that you're not relying on the institutional memory being passed on, because if someone leaves, retires, or is unavailable for some reason that knowledge is lost. I think that's perhaps the usefulness of some codified guidance.

KR: Yeah, and it's a risk that when it's not written down, it's very easy to by accident fail to comply with things because you just don't know. I mean it would be very easy to work in the

registrars team and not know that you need to use a Section 5 shipper. What would stop you? Nothing really. You could arrange transport without a Section 5 shipper and you probably could get away with it unless something went wrong, and you could merrily go on and do that. That's the case with a fair bit of it, really. In a way, you could probably go undetected and what's the checks and balance to stop that happening? I think documenting it and writing it down, and I'm very keen to add things to the checklist because it shouldn't be in people's heads and memory. As you say, when they go or they're off sick, it's not robust enough.

SB: You mentioned the checklist just then. Is that a checklist for collections in general? Is that a loans checklist? What does that look like?

KR: Yeah, it's a loans checklist. We've got a checklist which we adapt quite a lot because there's always new things, if we learn from one loan that was a gap. I'm trying to think of something we've added. I'm always adding to it, which is great. So it's a guide that the registrar team use. That's the benefit of having a registrar team because some museums don't have the registrar. They're managing the loan, they've got the checklist, they should be thinking of everything really. I've added quite a bit in, I've added things about weapons into that. Do they have a licence, is an easy first one. Do we need to cable tie? There's that sort of thing, so we've got quite a nice checklist for loans. What we haven't got so much is for acquisitions, actually. When it comes to an international weapons acquisition, we haven't got a checklist ready to go for that, so that is relying on knowledge within the team. That's probably something that I'm thinking about now, speaking about it, thank you. We should probably get that in place at some point when we can to assist with that. We have got an acquisitions checklist that we use, but it doesn't go into the detail of international weapons. That's something we could do to signpost.

SB: But I suppose things like provenance and due diligence is a whole other issue that would probably require another hour in of itself. It's really interesting that you've got that loan checklist. Would that be something that could be developed and made public to help other museums within the sector that have weapons collections? Is that a possible route, do you think?

KR: Yeah, it would be. I suppose that the bulk of the checklist is for the loan process, regardless of the weapons. The weapons element, there's probably just a few points, so I reckon you could. I think checklists are really good. I think if there was guidance, as part of that, it would be useful to do some sort of checklist. Yeah, I think you could.

SB: I suppose another way of doing it could be having it as a specific UKRG, not a Facilities Report, but a weapons checklist or something, just for these specific instances.

KR: Yeah. It's trying to keep things streamlined and have one obvious place to go, because there's some really useful literature out there. But people don't know it's there necessarily, so it's trying to find the best home. There'll be loads of people in the sector that don't know UKRG exists. They don't know about the Facilities Reports still. I think it's been better, there's been a document recently, I think NMDC [National Museum Directors' Council] are the owners, but it was done with the Touring Exhibitions Group and it's about loans. I can't think of the title now, but they've updated it. It's about lending and borrowing, and it's nice that UKRG have now got a box in that and they talk about facilities reports and that sort of thing. I feel like that's not always happened. It's good that that document, which is going to institutions that that may not have a big lending and borrowing history, that haven't got registrars, it's signposts for them. I think it's things like that, whether you'd want to put weapons into that document. That's another framework really for lending and borrowing that is useful to look at.

SB: It's trying to find, again, that balance between it being applicable in certain senses but being accessible as well for a lot of organisations. Perhaps issuing it under one of the more prominent organisations, something like maybe Collections Trust or Arts Council, as you said.

KR: Yeah. It's interesting because the nature of what museums do, because they cover the world, they cover so many things. This is the interesting thing about being a registrar, I guess, there's so many potential legal things you need to comply with, but it's just case by case. It could be CITES [Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora]. There's a real umbrella of options. It could be human remains, it could be radiation, and I put weapons in another thing like that. But it's not really mentioned. Is it that I'm in a weapons collection, so I'm highly aware of it, and actually there's loads of other things equivalent to weapons that also aren't in these guidelines, but I don't think about them because I don't have to work with them. I've never been sure about that. I've always thought it's a bit niche.

SB: But I reckon a lot of collections probably have weapons, at least a few in. Obviously you've still got to comply with the legislation, however many you've got. I know that Leeds Museums and Galleries have a few in a case.

KR: Yeah, I've changed my mind on it. That was my thinking when I came into it, but actually, the number of enquiries we get, I think it's a common enough thing that it warrants being mentioned alongside CITES, human remains.

SB: Archaeological collections. They all have their specific things, so weapons should have theirs as well.

KR: I think so. As I say, I didn't have the knowledge before I came into the job. But the longer I've worked in it, and seeing how many collections do interact with weapons, I think it warrants being mentioned.

SB: Excellent. Well, I think that's everything I'd like to ask you today, but are there any things that you'd like to mention that we haven't covered or anything you'd like to clarify that you've already said?

KR: I think we've probably covered it, I'm just going to check. I don't think I've got anything else to add, but I'll let you know if anything else comes to mind as well.

SB: Okay. Thank you very much, and with that I shall end the recording.