

Collections Development Policy

1. Scope and Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to detail the principles that guide collection development activities within the library, museum and archive of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh (hereafter 'RCPE'), as a part of fulfilling the RCPE's duties in accordance with our **Mission Statement**.

1.1 Mission Statement

The RCPE holds collections of outstanding medical, scientific, historical and cultural significance. The mission statement of the RCPE's library, museum and archive is:

We serve as the institutional memory of the RCPE, the history of our Fellows and Members and a vital resource for the history of medicine in Scotland. Our mission is to preserve and interpret our collections, to make them accessible to all and to contribute to the objects of the RCPE, that is to promote the science of medicine and to order and improve the practice of that science.

1.2 The governing body will ensure that both acquisition and disposal are carried out openly and with transparency.

1.3 By definition, the RCPE's library, museum and archive has a long-term purpose and holds collections in trust for the benefit of the public in relation to its stated objectives. The governing body therefore accepts the principle that sound curatorial reasons must be established before consideration is given to any acquisition to the collection or the disposal of any items in the collection.

1.4 Acquisitions outside the current stated policy will only be made in exceptional circumstances.

1.5 The RCPE's library, museum and archive recognises its responsibility, when acquiring additions to collections, to ensure that care of collections, documentation arrangements and use of collections will meet the requirements of the Museum Accreditation Standard and the Archives Accreditation Standard. It will take into account limitations on collecting imposed by such factors as staffing, storage and care of collection arrangements.

1.6 The RCPE's library, museum and archive will undertake due diligence and make every effort not to acquire, whether by purchase, gift, bequest or exchange, any manuscript, book or object or unless the governing body or responsible staff member is satisfied that the RCPE can acquire a valid title to the item in question.

1.7 In exceptional cases, disposal may be motivated principally by financial reasons. The method of disposal will therefore be by sale and the procedures outlined below will be followed. In cases where disposal is motivated by financial reasons, the governing body will not undertake disposal unless it can be demonstrated that all the following exceptional circumstances are met in full:

- the disposal will significantly improve the long-term public benefit derived from the remaining collection
- the disposal will not be undertaken to generate short-term revenue (for example to meet a budget deficit)
- the disposal will be undertaken as a last resort after other sources of funding have been thoroughly explored
- extensive prior consultation with sector bodies has been undertaken
- the item under consideration lies outside the museum's established core collection

2. History of the Collections

The RCPE has the oldest and largest medical library and archive in Scotland. The collections were established in 1682, only one year after the RCPE's foundation by the donation of material by Sir Robert Sibbald. Sibbald was not only one of the RCPE's founders but also the University of Edinburgh's first professor of medicine and Scotland's Geographer Royal.

As with many similar institutions, prior to the late twentieth century the RCPE's museum and archive collections were treated as a subset of its library. Its librarian, effectively, combined their titular role with that of curator and archivist. The value of a dedicated librarian was identified almost as quickly as the need for the RCPE to preserve books and manuscripts. Two posts, those of librarian and deputy librarian, were established within only eighteen months of the RCPE's foundation, in May 1683.

3. Our Collections

Our collections are comprised of Core and Lending Collections.

3.1 Core Collection

The Book

The RCPE's core library collection contains approximately 70,000 books, 30,000 of which are on display in its three libraries (titled the Top Library, Front Library and New Library). All items in the Core Collection are stored in locked cabinets, only Lending Collection items stored in the RCPE Reading Room are held on open shelves. Almost 60,000 of these books are now listed on the RCPE's online catalogue and the RCPE employs a part time book cataloguer who is in the process of adding the remaining 10,000 books to this catalogue.

Periodicals

The range of periodical titles is constantly monitored and compared to that of other libraries in Edinburgh and beyond, with a view to minimising duplication. New titles are normally added to stock only when the title concerns a core RCPE subject, though a decision is always made in the light of the title's availability in Edinburgh.

Museum Objects

The RCPE's object collections encompass medical items (medicine bottles, medical implements etc.) as well as other objects relating to the RCPE's history (architectural models, medals, ceremonial rods and canes etc.). These items were not purchased, but rather acquired through donations, bequests and as a result of the day-to-day activities of the RCPE. At present the RCPE holds over 3,500 objects.

Oral History

Oral history became a new area of collecting for the RCPE in the late 1980s. Many interviews were made over the next two decades creating a very wide ranging and important collection which is regularly being added to.

Archive

The archive contains material in traditional formats and also born digital records. The traditional format archive equates to over 3,000 linear metres.

The current archive of the RCPE reflects its roles in the organisation and administration of medical examinations, education and training. As the RCPE is a membership organisation records relating to the admission of new Fellows and Members form a significant component of the records of the RCPE. The RCPE's remit, of course, has not been static over the last 300 years. The creation of institutions such as the British Medical Association (BMA) and the National Health Service (NHS) have had significant impact on the role of the RCPE. Prior to the establishment of the BMA part of the RCPE's remit was the regulation of the medical profession and a large collection of disciplinary case files provides detail on the approaches which were adopted. The administrative and policy work of the RCPE is also detailed in the records relating to its committees, a series which contains the minutes and papers of over 300 individual committees.

The collections of deposited papers in the archive mostly consist of the papers of past and present Fellows and Members of the RCPE along with the records of bodies and organisations connected with the RCPE. Due to the RCPE's place in national and international medical society, its extensive list of notable past Fellows and Members and its numerous activities in connection with other bodies the archive have become extremely rich and varied. Indeed, with nearly 400 deposited collections the research value of these records is significant.

Access to the library, museum and archive collections has increased through the digitisation of collections which can be accessed on portals via the RCPE's website. Currently, over 15,000 books, archival items and objects can be accessed online.

3.2 Lending Collection

Our Lending Collection consists of printed books which date from post-1950 and have been assessed as low value and easily replaceable. There are approximately 2,000 items in the RCPE's Lending Collection, stored in the Front Library and Basement 8 Lending Store. The Lending Collection is available for loan to Fellows and Members of the RCPE and items in this collection are not necessarily subject to the same levels of collections management, care and conservation as our Core Collection.

No archives or museum objects are classified as being part of the Lending Collection.

4. Themes and priorities for future collecting

4.1 Acquisition is the process of obtaining responsibility for an item, associated due diligence, rights management and transfer of title.

4.2 Accession is a status afforded to those items (both analogue and digital) that the library, museum and archive of the RCPE deems to be of such significance that they merit permanent retention and preservation.

4.3 Our collections have developed since the foundation of the RCPE in 1681. The following five core collecting areas have been established to allow the continued, focused, development of our collections; supporting the work of the RCPE, its staff and Fellows and Members, and enhancing existing research strengths. The RCPE library, museum and archive seek to acquire:

- i. Material created by the RCPE
- ii. Material relating to the RCPE
- iii. Material relating to the work and lives of Fellows, Members, and associates of the RCPE
- iv. Material relating to the history of medicine in Scotland
- v. Material which enhances existing strengths within RCPE's collections

In addition:

Selected secondary sources are acquired where these directly support collection strengths

i. Material created by the RCPE:

The RCPE library, museum and archive will acquire:

- any records created before 1900 in the course of RCPE business
- after 1900, RCPE records will be selected as worthy of permanent preservation using retention scheduling procedures

ii. Material relating to the RCPE:

In order to place the life of the RCPE in a broader social context, the library, museum and archive actively seeks to acquire material which supports its official records. These records often provide an insight into the history of the RCPE which official administrative records may not convey. These records have usually been created by individual staff or groups and societies. The RCPE seeks to acquire:

- records of RCPE staff including official, professional and personal correspondence, biographical material, photographs, notebooks and memorabilia
- records of medical societies and committees affiliated with the RCPE, particularly minute books, pamphlets, leaflets and membership rolls

iii. Material relating to the work and lives of Fellows, Members and associates of the RCPE:

- records of individual physicians affiliated with the RCPE including lecture notes, diaries, biographical material, photographs, personal correspondence, memoirs and memorabilia

iv. Material relating to the history of medicine in Scotland, with a particular focus on eighteenth and nineteenth century Scottish medical history:

- records of medical societies, organisations or committees not affiliated with the RCPE but where there is no viable other home for them

v. Material which enhances existing strengths within RCPE's collections:

- items with important provenances related to existing collections
- any object or parts of objects which complete an object already in the collections
- material which enhances core subject areas, particularly: medicine in the Scottish Enlightenment, forensic medicine, medical botany, public health, medical education, psychiatry

5. Themes and priorities for rationalising and disposal

5.1 The library, museum and archive does not intend to dispose of collections during the period covered by this policy. Disposal is not a priority for the period of this policy and the RCPE library, museum and archive does not plan to undertake a review of collections for the purposes of deaccession or disposal.

6. Legal and ethical framework for acquisition and disposal of items

6.1 The RCPE library, museum and archive recognises its responsibility to work within the parameters of the Museum Association Code of Ethics and the Archives and Records Association Code of Ethics when considering acquisition and disposal.

7. Collecting policies of other organisations

7.1 The RCPE library, museum and archive will take account of the collecting policies of other organisations collecting in the same or related areas or subject fields. It will consult with these organisations where conflicts of interest may arise or to define areas of specialism, in order to avoid unnecessary duplication and waste of resources.

7.2 Specific reference is made to the following organisations:

7.2.1 It is recognised that the Lothian Health Services Archive is the primary body responsible for managing the archive and museum object collections relating to the activities of NHS Lothian, including hospitals within the region.

7.2.2 It is recognised that the remit of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh encompasses the history of surgery in Edinburgh and the history of its fellows and members. Equally, the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow's collecting remit encompasses the history of medicine and surgery in Glasgow, with a particular focus on its own fellows and members.

8. Acquisition

8.1 The library, museum and archive of the RCPE has a formal **Appraisal Procedure, Acquisition and Accessioning Procedure** and **Deaccessioning and Disposal Procedure**. Acquisitions are considered by the Library and Heritage Committee who have delegated authority from the Council to assess, approve or decline new acquisitions, and to recommend disposals. Except in exceptional circumstances, all disposals have to be first approved by the Council.

8.2 The RCPE will not acquire any object, manuscript or print material unless it is satisfied that it has not been acquired in, or exported from, its country of origin (or any intermediate country in which it may have been legally owned) in violation of that country's laws. (For the purposes of this paragraph 'country of origin' includes the United Kingdom).

8.3 In accordance with the provisions of the UNESCO 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, which the UK ratified with effect from November 1 2002, the RCPE will reject any items that have been illicitly traded. The governing body will be guided by the national guidance on the responsible acquisition of cultural property issued by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport in 2005.

9. Human remains

9.1 The RCPE does not hold or intend to acquire any human remains.

10. Biological and geological material

10.1 The RCPE will not acquire any biological or geological material.

11. Archaeological material

11.1 The RCPE will not acquire any archaeological material.

12. Exceptions

12.1 Any exceptions to the above clauses will only be because the RCPE's library, museum and archive is:

- acting as an externally approved repository of last resort for material of local (UK) origin
- acting with the permission of authorities with the requisite jurisdiction in the country of origin

In these cases the RCPE will be open and transparent in the way it makes decisions and will act only with the express consent of an appropriate outside authority. The RCPE will document when these exceptions occur.

13. Spoliation

13.1 The RCPE library, museum and archive will use the statement of principles 'Spoliation of Works of Art during the Nazi, Holocaust and World War II period', issued for non-national museums in 1999 by the Museums and Galleries Commission.

14. Disposal procedures

14.1 All disposal of RCPE museum objects will be undertaken with reference to the Spectrum primary procedures on disposal.

14.2 The governing body will confirm that it is legally free to dispose of an item. Agreements on disposal made with donors will also be taken into account.

14.3 When disposal of RCPE library, museum and archive collection material is being considered, the RCPE will establish if it was acquired with the aid of an external funding organisation. In such cases, any conditions attached to the original grant will be followed. This may include repayment of the original grant and a proportion of the proceeds if the item is disposed of by sale.

14.4 When disposal is motivated by curatorial reasons the procedures outlined below will be followed and the method of disposal may be by gift, sale, exchange or as a last resort – destruction.

14.5 The decision to dispose of material from the collections will be taken by the governing body only after full consideration of the reasons for disposal. Other factors including public benefit, the implications for the RCPE's collections and collections held by libraries, archive and museums and other organisations collecting the same material or in related fields will be considered. Expert advice will be obtained and the views of stakeholders such as donors, researchers, local and source communities and others served by the RCPE will also be sought.

14.6 A decision to dispose of collection material, whether by gift, exchange, sale or destruction (in the case of an item too badly damaged or deteriorated to be of any use for the purposes of the collections or for reasons of health and safety), will be the responsibility of the governing body of the RCPE acting on the advice of professional curatorial staff, if any, and not of the archivist, curator or manager of the collection acting alone.

14.7 Once a decision to dispose of material in the collection has been taken, priority will be given to retaining it within the public domain. It will therefore be offered in the first instance, by gift or sale, directly to other Accredited Archives or Accredited Museums likely to be interested in its acquisition.

14.8 If the material is not acquired by any Accredited Archive or Accredited Museum to which it was offered as a gift or for sale, then the archive and museum community at large will be advised of the intention to dispose of the material normally through a notice on the Museum Association's Find an Object web listing service, an announcement in the Museums Association's Museums Journal or in other specialist publications and websites (if appropriate).

14.9 The announcement relating to gift or sale will indicate the number and nature of items involved, and the basis on which the material will be transferred to another institution. Preference will be given to expressions of interest from other Accredited Archives or Accredited Museums. A period of at least two months will be allowed for an interest in acquiring the material to be expressed. At the end of this period, if no expressions of interest have been received, the RCPE may consider disposing of the material to other interested individuals and organisations giving priority to organisations in the public domain.

14.10 Any monies received by the RCPE's governing body from the disposal of items will be applied solely and directly for the benefit of the collections. This normally means the purchase of further acquisitions. In exceptional cases, improvements relating to the care of collections in order to meet or exceed Accreditation requirements relating to the risk of damage to and deterioration of the collections may be justifiable. Any monies received in compensation for the damage, loss or destruction of items will be applied in the same way. Advice on those cases where the monies are intended to be used for the care of collections will be sought from Museums Galleries Scotland.

14.11 The proceeds of a sale will be allocated so it can be demonstrated that they are spent in a manner compatible with the requirements of the Accreditation standard. Money must be restricted to the long-term sustainability, use and development of the collection.

14.12 Full records will be kept of all decisions on disposals and the items involved and proper arrangements made for the preservation and/or transfer, as appropriate, of the documentation relating to the items concerned, including photographic records where practicable.

Disposal by exchange of museum collections

14.13 The nature of disposal by exchange means that the RCPE will not necessarily be in a position to exchange the material with another Accredited museum. The governing body will therefore ensure that issues relating to accountability and impartiality are carefully considered to avoid undue influence on its decision-making process.

14.13.1 In cases where the governing body wishes for sound curatorial reasons to exchange material directly with Accredited or non-Accredited museums, with other organisations or with individuals, the procedures in paragraphs 14.1-5 will apply.

14.13.2 If the exchange is proposed to be made with a specific Accredited museum, other Accredited museums which collect in the same or related areas will be directly notified of the proposal and their comments will be requested.

14.13.3 If the exchange is proposed with a non-Accredited museum, with another type of organisation or with an individual, RCPE will place a notice on the MA's Find an Object web listing service, or make an announcement in the Museums Association's Museums Journal or in other specialist publications and websites (if appropriate).

14.13.4 Both the notification and announcement must provide information on the number and nature of the specimens or objects involved both in the RCPE's collection and those intended to be acquired in exchange. A period of at least two months must be allowed for comments to be received. At the end of this period, the governing body must consider the comments before a final decision on the exchange is made.

Disposal by destruction

14.14 If it is not possible to dispose of an object through transfer or sale, the governing body may decide to destroy it.

14.15 It is acceptable to destroy material of low intrinsic significance (duplicate mass-produced articles or common objects which lack significant provenance) where no alternative method of disposal can be found.

14.16 Destruction is also an acceptable method of disposal in cases where an object is in extremely poor condition, has high associated health and safety risks or is part of an approved destructive testing request identified in an organisation's research policy.

14.17 Where necessary, specialist advice will be sought to establish the appropriate method of destruction. Health and safety risk assessments will be carried out by trained staff where required.

14.18 The destruction of objects should be witnessed by an appropriate member of the RCPE library, museum and archive workforce. In circumstances where this is not possible, e.g. the destruction of controlled substances, a police certificate should be obtained and kept in the relevant object history file.

Documentation

This policy should be viewed in conjunction with:

Collections Care and Conservation Policy

Digital Preservation Policy

Collections Information Policy

Learning and Access Policy

Acquisition and Accessioning Procedure

Conservation and Preservation Procedure

Deaccessioning and Disposal Procedure

Policy review

This policy will be reviewed every four years.

Date approved by Council: 16 June 2023

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