



Museum:

Collections Development Policy (inc. Collecting/Disposal)

Contents

Contents.....	1
Name of governing body.....	2
Roles and Responsibilities.....	2
1. Relationship to other relevant policies/plans of the organisation	2
2. History of the collections	3
3. Overview of current collections.....	3
4. Collecting policy: themes and priorities for future collecting.....	3
4.1 Criteria.....	4
4.2 Accepting/declining acquisitions	4
4.3 Decision-making.....	4
5. Disposals: themes and priorities for rationalisation and disposal.....	4
6. Legal and ethical framework for acquisition and disposal of items	5
7. Collecting policies of other museums.....	5
8. Archival holdings.....	5
9. Acquisition.....	5
10. Additional Policy Principles.....	5
10.1 Human remains.....	5
10.2 Biological and geological material	6
10.3 Archaeological material	6
10.4 Exceptions	6
10.5 Spoliation	6
10.6 The restitution of human remains	6
10.7 Disposal procedures.....	6
Appendices.....	7
Appendix 1: Glossary of Terms	7
Appendix 2: Heritage Collections Deaccessioning and Disposal Procedures	Error! Bookmark not defined.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure a professional approach for the Museum's acquisitions (collecting) and disposal practice and to avoid indiscriminate or passive collecting. This should, in turn, encourage public confidence in the Museum as a suitable repository for future donations and bequests. The policy is in place to ensure that material is accepted according to a recognised strategy and serves as a reference document to guide curatorial and RCOG decision making.

The Museum Collections Development Policy will be published and reviewed at least once every five years. If Museum Accreditation is attained, Arts Council England will be notified of any changes and the implications of any such changes for the future of collections.

Name of governing body

The Museum, along with the Archive, is overseen by a Heritage Committee made up of RCOG and RCM staff and members, as well as external heritage professionals. The Heritage Committee reports to the Finance and General Purposes Committee of the Board of Trustees. Its function and purpose include:

- Providing official governance for the Heritage Collections;
- Showing due diligence with decision making;
- Discussing and ratifying policies, plans and procedures and programming pertaining to the Heritage Collections;
- Discussing acquisitions and disposals where appropriate;
- Advocating for the Heritage Collections internally at the RCOG, and to the heritage community and general public – this will in turn bring attention to, and public awareness of, the RCOG's current work and goals;
- Ensuring that professional standards of management, care, access and interpretation of the collections are maintained;
- Ensuring that the management of the collections meets the requirements of the national Arts Council's Museum Accreditation scheme and The National Archives' Archive Service Accreditation scheme.

By definition, the Museum 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 Collections, or the disposal of any items in the Museum's collections.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Curator is responsible for receiving and processing (appraisal, accessioning, cataloguing and rehousing) new acquisitions of Museum material.

The Head of Information and Governance is responsible for this policy and accompanying procedures.

The Heritage Committee is responsible for approving significant offers of donation (as defined below, in 9. Acquisition).

1. Relationship to other relevant policies/plans of the organisation

1.1 Museum's statement of purpose

'To become the primary centre for resources on, and to bring to life, the history of women's health care.'

In doing so, and by tracing the development of women's health care, it may inspire future generations to go into the specialties of obstetrics, gynaecology and midwifery.

1.2 The governing body ensures both acquisition and disposal are carried out openly and with transparency.

1.3 By definition, the museum 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 museum's collection.

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

1.5 The museum recognises its responsibility, when acquiring additions to its collections, to ensure that care of collections, documentation arrangements and use of collections will meet the requirements of the Museum Accreditation Standard. This includes using Spectrum primary procedures for collections management. It will take into account limitations on collecting imposed by such factors as staffing, storage and care of collection arrangements.

1.6 The museum will undertake due diligence and make every effort not to acquire, whether by purchase, gift, bequest or exchange, any object or specimen unless the governing body or responsible officer is satisfied that the museum can acquire a valid title to the item in question.

1.7 The museum will not undertake disposal motivated principally by financial reasons.

2. History of the collections

2.1 Throughout its history, heritage material, including artefacts, have been collected through donations and purchases, resulting in rich Museum collections that tell the story of the College's medical specialties, with a dedicated Museum (largely of pathological specimens, now disposed of) first established in 1938, but included in the 1929 founding Articles of Association:

'To provide, establish, and maintain offices, examination halls, lecture rooms, libraries and museums, with all requisite equipment'

2.2 In 2012 the collections of the Royal College of Midwives were brought to the RCOG as a long-term loan, further enhancing the range of material under the care of the RCOG Museum.

2.3 The RCOG Museum is managed by a Curator, and falls under the umbrella of the Research and Information Services department of the College, in turn reporting to the Executive Director, Membership, Global and Governance.

2.4 The Museum has a long-term purpose to inspire and inform visitors, and holds its collections in trust for the benefit of the College and the public.

3. Overview of current collections

3.1 The RCOG Museum currently has c.3,000 objects in its care, including the collections of the Royal College of Midwives. These include medical instruments, uniforms, medals and badges, personalia, decorative art (silverware) and fine art (oil paintings, water colours, sculptures, prints and engravings).

3.2 Sound curatorial reasons must be established before consideration is given to any acquisition, or the disposal of any items from the Museum's collections.

4. Collecting policy: themes and priorities for future collecting

The intention is to further develop the Museum, collecting by gift, commission, purchase or bequest, artefacts that will allow the Museum to promote the RCOG and RCM to their Memberships and to wider audiences, including through the web and social media. It aims to raise awareness of the Colleges' history and current work, and to inspire future generations of health care professionals.

4.1 Criteria

The Museum's collecting criteria will be to collect material that demonstrates/illustrates the following areas with particular attention made to fill gaps in the collection and concentrating on British material, with items from elsewhere considered by exception:

- a. The history and development (including contemporary artefacts) of the specialties of obstetrics, gynaecology, midwifery and women's health care – medical, social, self-care;
- b. The training and education of practitioners in women's health care;
- c. Key figures in the above fields;
- d. Past presidents, officers, fellows and members of the Colleges;
- e. The history of the Colleges, their traditions and buildings;
- f. Developments over the past 50 years;
- g. Experiences of patients;
- h. Experiences as practitioners and patients of those previously under-represented in the collections: women; disabled people; Black, Asian and minority ethnic people.

4.2 Accepting/declining acquisitions

4.2.1 Any donation offers or acquisition proposals will be considered where it falls within one or more of the criteria outlined above, but only if the donor is able to complete a Transfer of Title form demonstrating that they assert they right to gift the material to the Museum.

4.2.2 If material is offered to the Museum that fits the above criteria, it may still be declined if:

- a. The Museum already has identical or very similar examples – multiple examples of some items may be desirable, the Curator to decide on a case-by-case basis;
- b. The material is in poor condition such that it would require immediate or prohibitive conservation work;
- c. Despite its relevance, another heritage institution may be more appropriate;
- d. Its size and/or format would make storage and/or access impractical;
- e. There are any potential health or environmental hazards to accepting the material.

4.2.3 Duplicate material may still be considered if the provenance is significant (e.g. formerly owned by a President of one of the Colleges; part of a wider donation possibly including Archives material).

4.3 Decision-making

Acceptance or rejection of small donation offers (defined as 5 boxes or fewer) may be decided directly by the Curator. Large, complex or potentially sensitive acquisitions, or those with significant financial implications (e.g. for conservation, preservation and storage) will be referred for discussion and approval to the Heritage Committee, by email or at the next scheduled meeting.

5. Disposals: themes and priorities for rationalisation and disposal

5.1 If the Curator identifies material that falls outside of the collecting criteria themes, disposal may be recommended, following procedures that professional museum standards. The process will be documented, open and transparent. There will be clear communication with key stakeholders about the outcomes and the process.

5.2 The museum recognises that the principles on which priorities for rationalisation and disposal are determined will be through a formal review process that identifies which collections are included and excluded from the review. The outcome of review and any subsequent rationalisation will not reduce the quality or significance of the collection and will result in a more useable, well managed collection.

5.3 The procedures used will meet professional standards. The process will be documented, open and transparent. There will be clear communication with key stakeholders about the outcomes and the process.

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

The Museum recognises its responsibility to work within the parameters of the Museum Association Code of Ethics when considering acquisition and disposal.

7. Collecting policies of other museums

7.1 The Museum will take account of the collecting policies of other museums and 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 museums/organisations:

- Thackray Museum of medical history, Leeds;
- Wellcome Collection, London;
- Royal College of Nursing (LMHM);
- Royal College of Physicians;
- Royal College of Surgeons of England (LMHM);
- Other members of the London Museums of Health and Medicine group (LMHM).

8. Archival holdings

A separate RCOG Archive, incorporating the Archive of the Royal College of Midwives, is managed by an Archivist. The Archive has accredited status, through The National Archives scheme. The Archive and Museum comprise the RCOG Heritage Collections and work closely together on tours, displays, events and other activities.

9. Acquisition

9.1 The policy for agreeing acquisitions is detailed in the SOP Heritage Collections Acquisitions and Accessioning Procedures:

- All potential purchases require ED approval via completion of an Acquisitions and Loans-In Proposal form.
- Decisions around small donations are taken by the Heritage team, in accordance with the Collections Development policies for the Archive and Museum respectively. Small donations are defined as 25 items or fewer.
- Large, complex or potentially sensitive acquisitions, or those with significant financial implications (e.g. for conservation, preservation and storage) will be referred for discussion and approval to the Heritage Committee, following completion of an Acquisitions and Loans-In Proposal form.

9.2 The museum will not acquire any object or specimen unless it is satisfied that the object or specimen 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).

9.3 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, and the Dealing in Cultural Objects (Offences) Act 2003, the museum 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.

10. Additional Policy Principles

10.1 Human remains

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

10.2 Biological and geological material

The Museum will not acquire any biological or geological material.

10.3 Archaeological material

The Museum will not acquire any archaeological material.

10.4 Exceptions

Any exceptions to the above clauses will only be because the Museum:

- 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 Museum 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 Museum will document when these exceptions occur.

10.5 Spoliation

The museum 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.

10.6 The restitution of human remains

Although the Museum no longer holds any human remains, following a number of earlier ethical disposals, should any further examples be found at either of the Colleges, the Museum will follow the procedures in the 'Guidance for the care of human remains in museums', and contact the Human Tissue Authority.

10.7 Disposal procedures

10.7.1 All disposals will be undertaken with reference to the Spectrum primary procedures on disposal.

10.7.2 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.

10.7.3 When disposal of a Museum object is being considered, the Museum 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.

10.7.4 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.

10.7.5 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 Museum's collections and collections held by museums and other organisations collecting the same material or in related fields will be considered. Expert advice may be obtained and the views of stakeholders such as donors, researchers, local and source communities and others served by the Museum may also be sought.

10.7.6 A decision to dispose of a specimen or object, 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 Museum acting on the advice of professional curatorial staff, if any, and not of the curator or manager of the collection acting alone.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Glossary of Terms

- **Accessioning** is the process of transferring physical and legal custody of records into the Museum, including use of Transfer of Title forms and recording details about the objects in the Museum Accessions Registers.
- **Conservation** is the active protection of Museum material using professional conservation processes and techniques in order to prevent further deterioration.
- **Deaccessioning** is the formal, documented removal of a collection or item from the custody of the Museum.
- **Disposal** is the physical act of transferring the collection or item from the Museum to another destination. This includes transfer to another repository and, as a last resort, destruction.
- **Preservation** is the passive protection of Museum material where there is no direct physical intervention or treatment of the item. This includes rehousing objects in acid-free museum-grade boxes.