



Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists

HERITAGE COLLECTIONS ACCESS POLICY 2023

Introduction

The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists ('the RCOG' or 'the College') maintains Heritage Collections which comprise:

- the Archive, Rare Book and Museum collections of the RCOG
- the Archive, Rare Book and Museum collections of the Royal College of Midwives (RCM), which are managed by the RCOG under a Service Level Agreement
- Archive and Museum collections of bodies and individuals associated with both colleges and their specialties.

These collections are managed by the Heritage Team, who comprise a professionally qualified Archivist and Curator. The Archive is Accredited under [The National Archives' Archive Service Accreditation scheme](#).

Purpose and scope

This policy sets out the methods by which the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists ('the RCOG' or 'the College') makes its Heritage Collections accessible to internal and external users, either physically or remotely. It outlines the conditions around access, restrictions, copying, and outlines engagement activities such as tours, talks, social media, displays and loans.

This policy is governed and delivered in accordance with the Heritage Strategic Plan and Archive and Museum Forward Action Plans (see Appendices).

Policy

Physical access to the Heritage Collections

The RCOG recognises that public access to its Heritage Collections is essential for an informed society and that its collections have significant value for understanding social, community and personal history, specifically in the area of women's healthcare.

The RCOG recognises that allowing public access to its institutional records helps maintain institutional transparency and improve public understanding of the College's unique history and contributions to the healthcare profession. Access to collections is also an essential requirement for Archives Accreditation.

Most College records older than twenty years are available for consultation by external researchers, with other files made available on application. All College records are available for consultation by College Officers and members, with the exception of records covered by data protection legislation. Records containing patient identifiable data are closed for 100 years from the date of the record.

Heritage Collections are available on equal terms of access, and recognition is made of the different categories of users and their different requirements.



The RCOG provides free access to collections in its Reading & Quiet Room. Appointments are necessary for all visitors wishing to consult material from the Heritage Collections. Appointments must be made at least one week in advance to enable retrieval and can be made via the Archivist or Curator at heritage@rcog.org.uk.

Access to collections is subject to users abiding by the Reading & Quiet Room Guidelines. Users are also required to complete a User Undertaking form upon arrival.

Restrictions on access

Restrictions on collections are indicated on catalogue records and communicated to the user when they make their request for access. These restrictions take into consideration data protection legislation, business sensitivity and conditions imposed by external donors, and follow national guidance in terms of closure periods. All restrictions are subject to regular reviews.

Material from the Heritage Collections may be subject to temporary closure, e.g. for conservation, digitisation or cataloguing work. The Heritage Team provide further information regarding such closures, should they affect requests for access.

Appeals against denial of access to material from the Heritage Collections to be made to the Head of Information and Governance, who will provide a response within two working weeks.

Self-service photography

Users may use their own cameras and devices in order to make digital copies for research purposes only. There is no fee chargeable for this, but details of material copied must be noted on the Self-Service Photography/Scan Request form. The Heritage Team reserve the right to disallow any copying which may incur risk to the material being copied.

Enquiries and reprographics requests

The Heritage Team answer enquiries about the collections and related matters by email, telephone and post. Simple enquiries (of less than 15 minutes) are completed within 5 days, while enquiries requiring more research are completed within 10 working days (a partial or holding response may be sent if detailed research or complex records checks are required). Enquiries from staff and members are prioritised.

The Heritage Team cannot undertake research on behalf of enquirers, but will direct enquirers to possible sources of interest.

Enquirers can order digital copies of records, and may request permission for reproduction and publication of these, as outlined in the Reproduction and Publication Requests form and underpinned by the College's [Rights and Permissions Policy](#). Requests by external enquirers will usually incur a charge.

The Heritage Team reserve the right to copy/photograph collections using the copying process or processes which will minimise risk of damage. Copying requests may be refused where the risk of damage to items is deemed high and/or where the amount of material requested is excessive.



Engagement and learning

The provision of opportunities for learning and engagement with the Heritage Collections is a core element of the work of the Heritage Team. The RCOG is committed to employing a range of approaches to reach broad and diverse audiences (including users who may not previously have used or engaged with archive or museum collections) and to contributing towards social inclusion by improving contact between the College and surrounding communities. Approaches to supporting learning and engagement include (but are not limited to) the following:

Partnership and collaborative working

The Heritage Team work collaboratively with colleagues in various teams within both the RCOG and RCM and with external partners to promote and raise awareness of the Heritage Collections. This includes engagement with initiatives such as Open House London or of supporting internal activities and initiatives, such as providing content for awareness days, anniversaries, conferences and events.

Provision of volunteering and placement opportunities

Where possible, the Heritage Team provide opportunities for individuals to undertake placement and volunteering work to support skills development and provide work experience in the records and heritage sectors. These include placements for students undertaking professional qualifications in archives and records management or in museum work.

Tours and talks

The Heritage Team provide tours of the Heritage Collections to all, by appointment. Audiences include, but are not limited to, staff and members of the RCM and RCOG, members of the public and students of midwifery, medicine and medical history. The Heritage Team also deliver talks on the collections, either virtually or in person.

Social media

The RCOG uses social media and online tools to increase the breadth of audience reach and engage users with the Heritage Collections, in line with the College's [Social Media Policy](#). This is currently delivered via a [Heritage blog](#), but there is potential to expand to other platforms (such as a Twitter account dedicated to the Heritage Collections), which would highlight the collections, engage with wider audiences and link to other online resources. The Heritage Team also provide content for the main RCOG and RCM Twitter accounts, when requested, as well as for other stakeholders and partners.

Displays and external loans

The display of material from the Heritage Collections is guided by considerations laid out in the Heritage Collections Care and Conservation Policy. In addition to permanent/semi-permanent displays around the RCOG building, there are a number of display cases dedicated to changing temporary displays to tie in with specific anniversaries or themes. The development of these displays may also be undertaken by placement students or in collaboration with partners.

The RCOG is committed to enabling and broadening access to its Heritage Collections through responding to loan requests from prospective borrowers, including museums, libraries, galleries and archives. These can be in the UK or overseas and in the public or private sectors. Loans for external exhibitions and displays enable collections to be placed in new contexts and to reach more diverse audiences, raising awareness of the collections and the wider work of the College. Loan requests are



considered according to the preservation needs of the requested item(s) and the arrangements for display and transportation as outlined in the Heritage Collections Loans Policy. Borrowers are expected to meet all costs associated with the loan.

Media and press

The RCOG welcomes the opportunity to share items and stories from its Heritage Collections through the press and on film, television and radio, subject to the prevailing access conditions pertaining to the request and the service's own priorities, as well as available staff resources.

Requests for the provision and reproduction of still images of collection material should be submitted as an enquiry to heritage@rcog.org.uk. Proposals for documentary and location filming should be directed to pressoffice@rcog.org.uk. Location and supervision fees may be payable.

Procedures

Please see:

- Heritage Collections Access Procedures (Appendix 1).

Governance

The Heritage Collections are 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 F&GPC 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.

Roles and Responsibilities

The **Heritage Team** (Archivist and Curator) are responsible for the care of the Heritage Collections, which includes providing access to the collection to recognised professional standards. The aim of this policy is to ensure consistency in the level of access to and care for the collections.

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

The **Heritage Committee** is responsible for approving Archive and Heritage policies.

Appendices

Appendix 1: [Heritage Collections Access Procedures](#)



Royal College
of Midwives



Royal College of
Obstetricians &
Gynaecologists

Appendix 2: [Reading & Quiet Room Guidelines](#)

Appendix 3: [Heritage Collections Image Reproduction and Publication Request form](#)

Appendix 4: [Heritage Collections Self-Service Photography/Scan Request form](#)

Appendix 5: [Heritage Collections User Undertaking form](#)