

# Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists

## ARCHIVE COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT POLICY 2023

### Introduction

The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists ('the RCOG' or 'the College') maintains an archive collection ('the Archive') which comprises:

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

The Archive is Accredited under [The National Archives' Archive Service Accreditation scheme](#).

### Purpose and Scope

This document provides an overview of all the policies which support the management of the Archive of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists ('the RCOG' or 'the College'): principally, collections development, collections information, access, conservation and preservation.

This policy is governed and delivered in accordance with the Heritage Strategic Plan and Archive Forward Action Plan.

### Policy

#### Scope of the collections

##### Records of the RCOG

The Archive is the custodian of the historic records created by the RCOG since its foundation in 1929 to the activities of the present day. These records include:

- material relating to the founding of the British College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists
- all Council and committee minutes
- papers, special reports, surveys and projects conducted or supported by the RCOG
- records of lectureships, research awards, travel grants, scientific meetings and conferences
- documentation of the College's role as an advisor to external professional bodies, as well as collaboration with other medical colleges
- photographs of past Presidents, members and other eminent physicians, and of the College and its various activities
- scrapbooks of press cuttings relating to the College and to the specialty.

##### Records of the Royal College of Midwives



The records of the Royal College of Midwives (RCM) have been managed by the RCOG since 2011 under a Service Level Agreement. This collection comprises:

- Council and committee minutes, agendas and reports
- correspondence and papers of the College President and the General Secretary
- departmental records, photographs and printed material relating to the activities of, and prominent individuals involved in, the Royal College of Midwives, as well as the campaign for the registration, training and education of midwives, pregnancy, childbirth, contraception and abortion, dating from the foundation of the organisation in 1890 (then known as the Midwives Institute) to the present day.

### Special collections

The Archive also holds donated or deposited collections ('special collections') of personal or private records related to the specialties. Significant collections include:

- personal papers of RCOG founders Professor William Blair-Bell and Sir William Fletcher Shaw
- personal papers of past Presidents and Fellows
- 18<sup>th</sup>- and 19<sup>th</sup>-century notes of midwifery lectures
- records of the societies and institutions, including the Gynaecological Visiting Society, the Women's Visiting Gynaecological Club, the Fothergill Club, the Royal Maternity Charity and the British Lying-In Hospital
- the personal papers of midwives, including case registers, notebooks, diaries and photographs.

### Purpose of the Archive

The Archive:

- aims to support the strategic aim of the RCOG 'to set standards to improve women's health and the clinical practice of obstetrics and gynaecology in the British Isles and across the world' and its charitable objectives to 'encourage the study, and advance the science and practice, of obstetrics and gynaecology'
- provides the College's staff, membership and the public with a centre for resources for the history of women's healthcare, midwifery, obstetrics and gynaecology, as well as records of the work of the RCOG and RCM, their associated groups and bodies, and historic members
- is managed within the Research and Information Services team at the College, and supports the activities of the RCOG and RCM by documenting their administrative, educational and cultural histories and preserving examples of their material culture, achievements and research
- is governed by the Heritage Committee, which ensures that both acquisition and disposal are carried out openly and with transparency
- seeks to abide by all current archival and information governance legislation, as well as national and international archive standards and best practice
- holds Accredited status [under The National Archives' Archive Service Accreditation scheme](#). This is a national standard which defines good practice and agreed standards for archive services across the UK. The Accreditation process evaluates an organisation's ability to develop, care for and provide access to its archive collections, and those areas such as resources and planning which underpin those activities. The Archive was reviewed in 2018 and retains its Accredited status, with the next full re-application due in August 2023.



### External framework

This Collections Management Policy is determined by the College's commitment to upholding national and international legislation, appropriate sector standards, good practice and ethical codes.

The key pieces of legislation and standards underpinning this policy framework are:

- [UK General Data Protection Regulation \(UK GDPR\)](#)
- [Data Protection Act \(DPA\) 2018](#)
- [Equality Act 2010](#)
- [Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988](#)
- [Archives and Records Association Code of Ethics \(2020\)](#)
- [Archive Service Accreditation Standard](#)
- [BS 4971: 2017: Conservation and care of archive and library collections](#)
- [BS EN 16893: 2018: Conservation of Cultural Heritage – Specifications for location, construction and modification of buildings or rooms intended for the storage or use of heritage collections.](#)

### Internal framework

The RCOG Archive collections management policy framework consists of the following policies (see Appendices):

- Archive Collections Development Policy
- Archive Collections Information Policy
- Heritage Collections Access Policy
- Heritage Collections Care and Conservation Policy
- Heritage Collections Loans Policy.

This suite of policies aligns with the strategic direction outlined in the Heritage Strategy 2023–2026 and Archive Forward Plan 2023-2026, which are themselves underpinned by the [RCOG Strategy 2020–2025](#).

### Collections development

The RCOG has an Archive Collections Development Policy that includes:

- an overview of the RCOG's Archive collections and their scope
- the criteria which inform decisions on what material to collect, priority areas for collecting and limitations on collecting
- the terms and conditions governing the RCOG's collecting activities
- the conditions under which certain material may be deaccessioned or disposed of.

### Collections information

The RCOG has an Archive Collection Information Policy that includes:

- a description of how the RCOG obtains, documents, maintains and makes available information about its archive collections
- a commitment to provide and maintain a public-facing catalogue through upgrade or procurement of a collections management system
- a description of collections documentation procedures through the use of cataloguing manuals and procedural documents.



### Collections access

The RCOG has a Heritage Collections Access Policy that includes:

- a commitment to provide, support and promote access to the College's Heritage Collections, including its Archive, to internal and external users
- a description of how the College aims to provide both physical and remote access to its Heritage Collections
- information about restrictions on access to parts of the collections
- conditions around copying and reproducing the collections
- a description of how the collections underpin engagement and learning activities such as tours, talks, social media, displays and loans
- information about providing access to the collections to the press and media.

### Preservation and conservation

The RCOG has a Heritage Collections Care and Conservation Policy that includes:

- an outline of the systems and procedures to monitor the condition of the collections and the environment and building in which they are stored
- information about the sourcing of external professionals where required, e.g. for conservation work or dealing with hazardous substances
- a commitment to offer training to staff who handle collections
- information about assessing risks to material for external loans
- emergency response to disasters, as outlined in the Heritage and R&IS Emergency Plan.

### Loans

The RCOG has a Loans Policy that includes:

- the principles and procedures for loans out and loans in to support the College's mission and strategies
- the process by which incoming loans are approved
- the conditions under which outgoing loans are approved, including transport, insurance, legal title and collections care.

### Review of RCOG policies

This policy and those related to it is reviewed and assessed every three years, or if any of the following occur:

- a change in legislation or code of practice
- a change in user demand
- loss of or damage to an item
- an increase in the level of threat of theft, vandalism or terrorism
- an increase in the level of risk of damage from the environment
- a change in the level of financial support
- a significant addition to the collections
- a change in paid and unpaid employee levels or responsibilities
- new research affecting the conservation of items in the collections.



## Governance

The Archive, along with the Museum, 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 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 **Archivist** is responsible for ensuring that the RCOG Archive is managed to national and international professional standards and within ethical frameworks, and for creating and updating the suite of policies which comprise the RCOG Archive collections management policy framework (detailed below) and their associated procedures.

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: Glossary of Terms

Appendix 2: [Archive Collections Development Policy](#)

Appendix 3: [Archive Collections Information Policy](#)

Appendix 4: [Heritage Collections Access Policy](#)

Appendix 5: [Heritage Collections Care and Conservation Policy](#)

Appendix 6: [Heritage Collections Loans Policy](#)

## Appendix 1: Glossary of Terms

- **Accessioning** is the process of transferring physical and legal custody of records into the Archive, including recording details about the records into an archive cataloguing system.
- **Appraisal** is the process of assessing records to determine their long-term value. This concentrates on the historical evidential value (how the record documents the history,



structure and functions of an organisation) and informational value (value in providing research material on persons, places and subjects) of records.

- **Conservation** is the active protection of archive material using professional conservation processes and techniques and, where necessary, chemical treatment in order to prevent further deterioration.
- **Deaccessioning** is the formal, documented removal of a collection or item from the custody of the Archive.
- **Disposal** is the physical act of transferring the collection or item from the Archive to another destination. This includes transfer to another repository, return to depositor or donor and, as a last resort, destruction.
- **Preservation** is the passive protection of archive material where there is no direct physical intervention or chemical treatment of the item. This includes rehousing records in archival-quality enclosures such as acid-free folders and boxes.
- **Rare Books** are defined as books and pamphlets which are over 100 years old and which are distinguished by their early printing date, their limited issue, the special character of the edition or binding or their historical interest.
- A **Repository** is a storage facility (whether physical or electronic) in which records with archival value are permanently preserved.
- A **Retention period** is the length of time records should be kept in a certain location or form for administrative, legal, fiscal, historical or other purposes.