

Collections Information Policy

1. Scope and Purpose

1.1 Scope

This policy provides a high-level explanation of the kinds of collection information which is gathered, created and held within the library, museum and archive of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh (hereafter 'RCPE'). It forms one element of the collections management framework of the RCPE. This policy is supported by collections-related actions contained within the **Library, Museum and Archive Forward Plan** and risk register, as well as other policies, procedures and guidelines detailed within this document.

1.2 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to detail the principles that guide collection information management within the RCPE and to detail the minimum level of collections information which the RCPE is committed to create and maintain.

These principles will:

- meet or exceed minimum professional standards in collection documentation, tracking and care
- ensure collections documentation is recognised as the basis of good collections management and security and therefore prioritised as such
- extend access to collections and collection information where appropriate, including onsite access and object loans
- strengthen the security of the collections
- ensure collections information is protected and secure
- improve accountability for collections care and documentation
- improve risk management for the collections

1.3 Definitions

Accessioning: the process of recording the admission of an item or group of items into the Core Collections.

Acquisition: the process of obtaining responsibility for an item, or group of items.

Appraisal: the process of deciding whether an item, or group of items, has continuing, long-term value.

Cataloguing: the professionally coordinated construction of a structured list of information about or relating to items, or groups of items, within the collections.

CMS: collections management system. The RCPE's collections management infrastructure combines two enterprise software systems: Calm (supplied by Axiell Group) and Liberty (which is supplied by Softlink). The Calm system contains the collection records for both museum and archive collections while Liberty contains collection records for the RCPE's library collections.

Collections information: information that the RCPE collects, creates, holds and maintains, and which can be related to items in our collections. This includes information about provenance, accessioning, acquisition, format, content, physical condition, location, ownership, access rights, management, research, contextual information, verbal or written descriptions and exhibition interpretation of an item or items.

Inventory: the minimal viable record needed to identify and locate items, or groups of items, within the collections. This basic level of collections information is as defined in the Spectrum 5.1 collection management standard.

2 Principles

2.1 The RCPE aims to maximise access to and use of our collections, whilst also prioritising the long-term security and preservation of our collections. Good quality collections information is essential to managing access to collections while maintaining their integrity.

2.2 The Collections Management Systems are the primary tools for managing collections information. The RCPE is committed to maintaining and supporting these systems and ensuring that the information they contain is transparent, up-to-date and is created and maintained in line with information standards as far as possible. See Appendix A.

2.3 We strive for efficiency in our collections information activities, to link relevant information rather than duplicate and to create minimal viable inventory records for all collections before carrying out information enrichment work.

2.4 We aim to continuously review and improve the collections information we hold, in light of developing standards, frameworks and the activities which the collection information supports.

2.5 We consider the RCPE's visitors, Fellows and Members and researchers whenever we collect or create collections information, considering how it may assist them and their interests and priorities.

2.6 We aim to increase access to our collections via the provision of online digital resources and onsite exhibitions and activities and we understand that it is the development of collections information which makes these activities possible.

2.7 We aim to provide enhanced security for our collections through collections information which ensures that the location and movement of items is controlled and tracked, providing security against loss or theft of collections items.

2.8 Documentation backlogs will be identified, prioritised and addressed as resources permit.

3 Collections information

3.1 Catalogue history

The main source of information regarding the RCPE's collections is the Calm database (which contains accession and catalogue records for the museum objects and archives) and the Liberty catalogue (which contains accession and catalogue records for the book collections).

The library collections have been catalogued at various points in the RCPE's history, those catalogues are all listed below. More recently a library database, Alice, was purchased in 1999 and then the RCPE moved to the current system, Liberty, in 2013.

Portions of the museum object and archives collections have been included in various listings, particularly the portraits publication listed below but also within the various accession and donation registers. The first attempt to create a comprehensive catalogue began in the late 1980s with the employment of Joy Pitman to catalogue the deposited collections. The RCPE purchased Calm in 2011 and subsequently first the deposited archives, then the institutional archives and finally the RCPE's object collection were added to the catalogue.

The following historic catalogues/records are of continuing relevance and use and are retained as permanent records of the history of the collections.

| Reference number | Description | Date | Notes | Contains |
|------------------|---|------|-------|--|
| WB 1 FS2 | Portraits in the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh, edited by Alistair G. Cruikshank and Sir William Kinninmonth | 1981 | | Portraits (also contains some busts and objects) |

| | | | | |
|---|---|--|--|-----------------------------------|
| Z 695.1.M48 | Bound catalogue (organised by subject) | Pre-1900 | | Books |
| Z 675.M4 | Bound catalogue (organised by author) | Pre-1900 | | Books |
| N/A | Card catalogue (organised by author) | Mid-20 th century | Supplements the bound pre-1900 catalogue | Books |
| Z 675.M4 | Press catalogue | c.mid 19 th century to 1920 | List of all of the library shelves and what was on them | Books |
| RCP/LIB/3/1 RCP/LIB/3/2 RCP/LIB/3/3 RCP/LIB/3/4 RCP/LIB/3/5 RCP/LIB/3/6 RCP/LIB/3/9 RCP/LIB/3/11 RCP/LIB/3/15 | Accession, donation and purchase books | 1681-2021 | | Books, objects and manuscripts |
| RCP/LIB/3/7 RCP/LIB/3/8 RCP/LIB/3/10 RCP/LIB/3/12 RCP/LIB/3/13 RCP/LIB/3/14 RCP/LIB/3/16 RCP/LIB/3/17 | Accession, donation and purchase subject files | 1845-2022 | | Books, objects and manuscripts |

3.2 Object entry

Items can be brought into the RCPE's library, museum and archive for a number of reasons, including loans for exhibition display and donations or purchases. The acquisition principles are detailed in 3.2 below, while incoming item loans are detailed in 3.7.

The library, museum and archive only accepts items for entry via trained designated staff. If no trained designated member of staff is available the item cannot be accepted. Donations cannot be left at the RCPE reception or with another member of staff without the permission of a member of the library, museum and archive team. Items are only accepted subject to agreement of the terms

and conditions stipulated by the RCPE. Unless otherwise agreed the RCPE accepts no liability for any items deposited.

The RCPE will not accept into our premises any item for loan, donation or gift which may pose a risk to staff, the public or the collections. This includes items which are at risk of pest infestation.

3.3 Acquisition and accessioning

We capture at least inventory level details for all items newly entering our long-term care, through our **Acquisition and Accessioning Procedure**, **Archive and Museum Object Cataloguing Guidelines** and **Library Cataloguing Guidelines**. We encourage our donors to supplying information relating to the provenance and use of the items donated in order to enrich our collection information.

3.4 Location and movement control

Individual items or groups/series of items from the collections may be moved to different locations for the purpose of curation, study or display. A change in location may reflect a permanent relocation or a temporary move, for example for display purposes. Items can be moved within the RCPE's premises (i.e. within premises located at 8 to 13 Queen Street) or to non-RCPE offsite premises.

- If items are moved for less than 24 hours and remain on the RCPE's premises and under the supervision of library, museum and archive staff (for example, if they are retrieved to the reading room for viewing by a visiting researcher) then an electronic movement record will not be created
- Onsite movement of collection items can only take place with the permission of a member of library, museum or archive staff
- The process for managing and documenting offsite loans is detailed in 3.8 below
- If items are transferred within the RCPE, e.g. when a collection is relocated from one store to another or is placed on display, their electronic location record will be updated.

3.5 Inventory and backlog management

Core inventory information (listed below) has been captured for all existing catalogued collection items. For museum objects and archives this information is held in the Calm database, for the book collections this is held in the Liberty database.

Core inventory information:

- Unique object number
- Object name
- Number of objects (if a group)
- A brief description
- The current location

- A record of who owns the item if not the RCPE, and if RCPE a record of where it came from

Plans to further enhance catalogue records for our Core Collections are documented in our collections information plan, which is part of our wider **Library, Museum and Archive Forward Plan**. This sets out how we will identify, prioritise and address inventory and cataloguing priorities, as resources permit.

3.6 Cataloguing

The RCPE's Core Collections comprise rare books, objects, manuscripts, periodicals and born digital material, as detailed in our **Collections Development Policy**. These include the records of the RCPE itself as well as externally acquired collections. Managing the information about these collections, associated Data Protection, Copyright and other associated rights and agreements is essential to the ethical and safe use of and access to the collections.

Collection information is created and managed through the Collection Management Systems. Records are created in compliance with the standards detailed in Appendix A and following the processes detailed in our **Archive and Museum Object Cataloguing Guidelines** and **Library Cataloguing Guidelines**. Each collection item is labelled with an item number.

Cataloguing targets are detailed in the **Library, Museum and Archive Forward Plan**, but broadly priority is given to items entirely uncatalogued or unrecorded over those with existing records, even where those records would benefit from enhancement.

3.7 Object exit

The process for permanently removing collection items is managed through the **Collections Development Policy, Appraisal Procedure, Deaccessioning and Disposal Procedure** and **Record of Destruction and Deaccession Form**.

The process for managing outgoing loans for display is detailed in 3.8 below.

At present the RCPE does not permit the loan of Core Collections for research or any other purposes other than display.

3.8 Incoming loans

The following criteria will be used when requesting a loan:

- The RCPE requires the owners of the items to provide a valuation of their items, in writing, a minimum of a month before the item arrives at the RCPE

- For incoming loans, if no valuation is provided by the lender, after the RCPE has requested it, then the RCPE will assume the value of the item is £0 (zero pounds sterling)
- While other staff or Office Bearers may informally discuss the potential borrowing of items for display, any official request to a lender must be approved and sent by the Heritage Manager & Librarian
- Exhibitions should be designed and built to ensure that the display of collections is undertaken in such a way that it minimises risk to their preservation, particularly from the agents of deterioration
- Loans will only be requested for inclusion in a publicly accessible exhibition, and not for research purposes or other individual or restricted use
- Environmental monitoring equipment shall be provided in all exhibitions spaces to monitor the temperature, relative humidity, and light levels in the spaces and individual cases/objects as deemed necessary. Pest monitoring and management will also be undertaken in all exhibition spaces. Details for the monitoring process can be found in the **Collections Care and Conservation Policy** and the **Conservation and Preservation Procedure**
- The RCPE will not acquire or borrow any object unless it is satisfied that the owner/lender has good legal title and they, or any agent acting for them, has full legal authority to enter into an agreement with the RCPE
- Lenders of items to the RCPE for display purposes will be provided with a receipt and proof of loan
- Any item loaned to the RCPE will be held securely and its location tracked at all times

3.9 Outgoing loans

The process for assessing loan requests and documenting and managing outgoing loans is managed through our **Loans Policy**, **Loans Out Procedure**, **Loan Condition Report**, **Loan Facilities Report** and **Loans Out Agreement Form**.

3.10 Digital collections

Born digital items will be catalogued into the Collection Management Systems in the same way as physical items. Digital items will be managed through our **Digital Preservation Policy** and **Digital Preservation Procedure**.

3.11 Access to collections information

The RCPE is committed to open access with regards to its collection information and collections data are made freely accessible via the RCPE's website and through third party data repositories.

There are certain circumstances where data are not automatically publicly released. These include where information could compromise collection security (for example the location of high value

collection items), information currently closed under legislation or information closed on the request of its donor or creator.

3.12 Security of collections information

Robust mechanisms are in place to ensure the security and sustainability of our collections information and digital collections assets, as detailed in the RCPE's **Information Security Policy**.

3.13 Collections auditing

The library, museum and archive team will undertake a review of one aspect of collections management each year. This includes the auditing of physical objects (their locations, condition etc.) and an audit of their related collections information. The purpose of this audit is to highlight differences between agreed procedures and actual current ways of working, then to resolve these differences through pragmatic and practical solutions. This process is incorporated into the collections information plan, which is part of our wider **Library, Museum and Archive Forward Plan**.

3.14 Loss and damage

The RCPE has a duty of care for the collections and takes loss very seriously.

The steps to be taken when an item is identified as lost are detailed in the **Conservation and Preservation Procedure**.

Appendix A – Legislation, Ethical Codes and Sector Standards

This policy has been written with reference to:

Legislation

- Copyright Act, 1988 (including amendments)
- COSHH: Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations, 2002
- Dealing in Cultural Objects (Offences) Act, 2003
- Charities Act, 2006
- Equality Act, 2010
- Data Protection Act, 2018

Ethical Codes

- International Council on Archives, Code of Ethics, 1996
- Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals, Ethical Principles for Library and Information Professionals, 2004
- International Council of Museums, Code of Ethics for Museums, 2006
- Museums Association, Code of Ethics for Museums, 2015
- Archives and Records Association, Code of Ethics, 2020

Sector Standards

- British Standards Institute, BS4971: 2002
- Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules 2nd Edition (AARC2), 2005
- ISAD(g) – General International Standard Archival Description, 2007
- British Standards Institute, PAS 197: 2009
- Benchmarks in Collections Care 2.0, 2011
- Machine-readable cataloguing 21 (MARC21) standard, 2017
- NLM (National Library of Medicine) Classification, 2017
- Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), 2018
- SPECTRUM 5.1 – The Museum Collections Management Standard, 2022
- Library of Congress Classification
- MeSH (Medical Subject Headings)

Documentation

This policy should be viewed in conjunction with:

Collections Development Policy
Collections Care and Conservation Policy
Conservation and Preservation Procedure
Digital Preservation Policy
Digital Preservation Procedure
Information Security Policy
Loans Policy
Loans Out Procedure
Loan Condition Report
Loan Facilities Report
Loans Out Agreement Form
Acquisition and Accessioning Procedure
Library, Museum and Archive Forward Plan
Archive and Museum Object Cataloguing Guidelines
Library Cataloguing Guidelines
IT Strategic Plan

Policy review

This policy will be reviewed every four years.

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