



Heritage Collections Development Policy

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Policy Statement

The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG) stands for *Better healthcare for women, everywhere*. The heritage collections held at the RCOG support this by aiming to become the centre for resources for the history of women's healthcare.

The heritage collections are comprised of unique and historical published books, objects and artefacts, and unpublished archival material relating to the specialty of obstetrics, gynaecology and midwifery.

The Knowledge Management team is responsible for the management of this heritage collection, which includes support for the activities of the RCOG by documenting its administrative, educational and cultural history and preserving examples of its material culture and intellectual output. Material is primarily acquired from the administrative departments of the RCOG, although external deposits from the membership and members of the public are considered subject to fulfilling the criteria for acquisition below.

The Knowledge Management team is also responsible for the management of the heritage collection of the Royal College of Midwives (RCM), which is housed at the RCOG and is comprised of library, archive and museum material. A separate RCM Collections Development Policy is available.

This policy is supported by a Heritage Collections Development Strategy and Procedures for Accessions and Donations.



Criteria for Acquisition

1. Administrative records

The Knowledge Management team selects for permanent retention administrative records of the RCOG as an historic account of its governance, strategic planning, policy decisions, organisational structure, and functions.

It also selects records relating to standard-setting and quality improvement within the specialty and to the development of training and overseas initiatives, as evidence of its activities in the study and advancement of the science and practice of obstetrics and gynaecology.

A copy of each publication issued by the RCOG is retained in the College Archive.

2. Records of related organisations

The RCOG will consider acquiring the historical records of organisations with which it has a strong administrative or organisational link. Examples are organisations that are, or have been, based physically within the College, those that have shared its administrative systems, or are predecessor or successor bodies to functions of the College.

The RCOG may also consider the acquisition of the historical records of other organisations in the field of obstetrics and gynaecology. Priority will be given to material that builds closely on existing collection strengths and/or is in danger of neglect or destruction. Where the College cannot itself undertake physical custody of such collections, it will work in partnership with other organisations to encourage good collections management, and/or endeavour to find another suitable place of deposit.

The RCOG will not acquire organisational records that are still in current or semi-current use by their originator.

3. Personal papers

The RCOG will seek to acquire the personal papers of past Officers, Fellows and Members of the RCOG, where they have a strong relationship to the corporate history of the College or to the specialty, or where they illustrate representative careers in obstetrics and gynaecology.

Other personal papers will be collected where they show a close relationship to existing holdings, and priority will be given to those in danger of neglect or destruction.

4. Museum artefacts

The RCOG seeks to acquire artefacts which reflect the development of the specialty and/or relate to the corporate history of the College. Artefacts will be appraised on an individual basis, and priority will be given to objects which are deemed to be directly relating to the history of the RCOG, unique in their ability to convey an aspect of the history of the specialty of obstetrics and gynaecology, able to be stored effectively and preserved correctly within the resources available to the RCOG Knowledge Management team, and which do not duplicate existing holdings.



Terms and Conditions

The RCOG does not seek to compete for papers with other recognised archive repositories. It welcomes the strength and diversity to be found in national and international archival provision for the history of medicine, and will work co-operatively with other repositories in order to determine the most appropriate place of deposit for records relating to the history of obstetrics and gynaecology.

Records in any format will be considered for acquisition, including plans, drawings, photographs, and electronic records. Material will not, however, be acquired where adequate storage, preservation, cataloguing and access cannot be achieved with the RCOG's existing or foreseeable resources. This in particular applies to specific audio-visual material where equipment is unavailable and digitisation resources unavailable.

The RCOG will not acquire any item unless it is satisfied that the donor or depositor has the appropriate authority to give or transfer it to the College and, in the case of a donation, that the College can acquire a valid title to the item.

The RCOG will not acquire by purchase, gift, bequest or exchange any item unless it is satisfied that it has not been acquired in, or exported from, its country of origin in violation of that country's laws.

The RCOG will generally require legal ownership of all accessions to the College. Long-term loan of archival and museum collections will be considered only under exceptional circumstances, and under terms formally agreed with the owners prior to transfer.

Donors of heritage items will be required to sign a formal deposit agreement, placing in writing the terms of the gift, as agreed with a member of the Knowledge Management team.

The RCOG will formally assert title in all its heritage collections, agreeing terms of copyright and reproduction rights with donors, authors or makers where appropriate.



De-accessioning Policy

The RCOG accepts the principle that there should be a strong presumption against the disposal of any documents in its custody.

Circumstances in which the RCOG might be required to de-accession heritage material could include:

- The existence of duplicate or ephemeral material among collections
- Knowledge that material belongs more properly in another recognised repository
- Inability of the College to permanently provide proper care for heritage material.

The following procedures for de-accessioning may apply:

The donor or their nominated successor will be contacted and the material in question offered to be returned.

In the event of the donor or successor not accepting the return of the material, all reasonable attempts will be made to transfer material to an accredited repository.

On the failure of the above two procedures, permission will be sought from the donor or their successors for permission to destroy the material. The RCOG will not proceed with destruction unless this permission is given.

In the event that neither of the above is possible, and if the material has been identified as unique and of value, advice will be sought from a governing professional body such as the National Archives.

Review date: March 2017 or earlier in the event of changes in wider Knowledge and Information services at the RCOG.