

Royal College of General Practitioners Heritage Collections Development Policy

Repository

RCGP Heritage Collections, Royal College of General Practitioners

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1. Policy Statement

1.1 The strategic plan of the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) involves '*Putting members at the heart of everything we do*'. The Heritage Collections should therefore represent not just the College and its institutional heritage but must also represent the members themselves.

1.2 Heritage Collections held at the RCGP support this by serving the College's staff, Membership and the public with access to historic collections representing general practice, as well as records of the work of the RCGP, its associated groups and bodies, and its historic Members.

1.3 The Archivist at the College is responsible for the management of this Heritage Collection, which supports the activities of the RCGP by documenting its administrative, educational and cultural history and preserving examples of its material culture, achievements and research.

1.4 The Archive Collections are primarily acquired through formal transfer from administrative departments within the RCGP. External deposits from members, other institutions and the general public are also welcomed subject to fulfilling the criteria for acquisition below. These external deposits form the special collections of the RCGP Heritage Collections and are managed under the same policies as the permanent institutional collection.

Supporting Documents:

This policy is supported by the *Collections Management Policy* and the *Collections Information Policy*.

2. Statutory Position

The Royal College of General Practitioners

The unique and significant history and development of general practice as a distinct discipline in UK health care is recorded in the institutional archives of the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP).

The founders of the College were conscious of the fact that by creating an organisation devoted to creating and promoting high standards in general practice they were making history so they ensured that selected records of their activities should be kept for posterity. The Steering Committee which created the College included the aim that it “ *be a repository for the traditions of general practice. There must surely be a sense of urgency among all medical men and women for an established body to record and preserve the art of the family doctor.....*”

The College was founded in 1952 and John, later Lord, Hunt, first Honorary Secretary of the College, established the archive in 1954, and at a meeting of Council on 9 June 1956 appointed the first College Archivist. The Heritage Committee (formerly the Museum and Archives Committee) was created in 1994 and since 1996 a professional archivist has been employed to manage the Archives.

3. Archive and Museum Standards and Accreditation

The RCGP archives and museum collections are not currently accredited. The archive standard is administered by the Archive Service Accreditation Committee in partnership with various UK archive bodies including the Archives and Records Association (UK), Archives and Records Council Wales, National Records of Scotland, Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, Scottish Council on Archives and The National Archives. Museum accreditation is managed by Arts Council England; Museums Galleries Scotland, Northern Ireland Museums Council and the Welsh Government (Museums Archives Libraries Division).

This national standard 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.

Therefore, whilst the RCGP collections are not yet accredited the collections should be managed to these recognised standards and improvements made in order to reach accredited standards and be in the position to apply for accreditation in the future.

4. Criteria for Acquisition

Material should only be accepted into the collections if it falls within the acquisition guidelines, as detailed below.

4.1 Administrative records

4.1.1 The Archivist selects for permanent retention administrative records of the RCGP as an historic account of its governance, strategic planning, policy decisions, organisational structure, and functions. The criteria for selecting this material is detailed in the College Retention Schedule.

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

4.2 Records of related organisations

4.2.1 The RCGP 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.

4.2.2 The RCGP may also consider the acquisition of the historical records of other organisations in the field of general practice and primary care. 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.

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

4.3 Personal papers

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

4.3.2 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.

4.4 Museum Collections

4.4.1 The RCGP will seek to acquire objects which have a strong relation to the College or to general practice. This might include artefacts used by or created by past Officers, Fellows or Members of the RCGP where they have a strong relationship to the corporate history of the College or to the specialty, or where they illustrate representative careers in general practice.

4.4.2 The RCGP will seek to acquire objects which enhance the existing museum collections, for example, by providing better quality examples or filling in gaps in the historic collections

4.4.3 The RCGP will only acquire duplicate material where it exists as part of a larger collection of items which meet the collecting criteria.

5. Terms and Conditions

5.1 The RCGP 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.

5.2 Items in any format will be considered for acquisition, including plans, drawings, photographs, electronic records and objects. Material will not, however, be acquired where adequate storage, preservation, cataloguing and access cannot be achieved with the RCGP's existing or foreseeable resources.

5.3 The RCGP 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.

5.4 The RCGP 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.

5.5 The RCGP 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.

5.6 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 Research and Information Services Team.

5.7 The RCGP will formally assert title in all its heritage collections, agreeing terms of copyright and reproduction rights with donors, authors or makers where appropriate. The RCGP will require copyright access wherever possible.

6. De-accessioning Policy

6.1 The RCGP accepts the principle that there should be a strong presumption against the disposal of any documents in its custody. By definition the archive should possess collections intended for permanent acquisition.

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

- 6.1.1 The existence of duplicate or ephemeral material among collections
- 6.1.2 Knowledge that material belongs more properly in another recognised repository
- 6.1.3 The material is irrelevant to the College
- 6.1.4 Inability of the College to permanently provide proper care for heritage material.
- 6.1.5 The item has deteriorated beyond repair or use

6.2 See the Deaccession and disposal policy and procedures for further information.

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The collections development policy will be published and reviewed at least once every five years, sooner in the event of a major change.