



Royal College
of Surgeons
of England
ADVANCING SURGICAL CARE



Royal College of Surgeons of England Museums

Collections Development Policy April 2022

Name of museum: Royal College of Surgeons of England's Museums

Name of governing bodies:

Council of the Royal College of Surgeons of England
Board of Trustees of the Hunterian Collection (for the Hunterian Collection)

Date on which this policy was approved by governing bodies:

Hunterian Collection Trustees 9 February 2022
Library Museums and Archive Committee 24 March 2022
RCSEng Council 14 April 2022

Policy review procedure:

The collections development policy will be reviewed and published from time to time, at least once every five years.

Date at which this policy is due for review: April 2027

Arts Council England will be notified of any changes to the collections development policy, and the implications of any such changes for the future of collections.

1. Relationship to other relevant policies/plans of the organisation:

1.1. The museum's statement of purpose is:

The Royal College of Surgeons of England (hereafter, 'the College') holds collections of outstanding medical, scientific, historical and cultural significance, Designated by Arts Council England. The collections are held in trust for the benefit of the public in relation to its stated objectives. Its aim is to care for and use these collections:

- 1.1.1. To enhance the College's reputation by raising awareness of surgeons and their work in society.
 - 1.1.2. To aid the professional work of the College by providing training resources.
 - 1.1.3. To facilitate and generate excellent medical, scientific, historical and other research
 - 1.1.4. To support public engagement with, and understanding of, surgery, its history and practice and related arts and sciences.
- 1.2. The governing bodies will ensure that both acquisition and disposal are carried out openly and with transparency.
 - 1.3. By definition, the museum has a long-term purpose and holds collections in trust for the benefit of the public in relation to its stated objectives. The governing bodies therefore accepts the principle that sound curatorial reasons must be established before consideration is given to any acquisition to the collection, or the disposal of any items in the museum's collection.
 - 1.4. Acquisitions outside the current stated policy will only be made in exceptional circumstances.
 - 1.5. The museum recognises its responsibility, when acquiring additions to its collections, to ensure that care of collections, documentation arrangements and use of collections will meet the requirements of the Museum Accreditation Standard. This includes using SPECTRUM primary procedures for collections management. It will take into account limitations on collecting imposed by such factors as staffing, storage and care of collection arrangements.
 - 1.6. The museum will undertake due diligence and make every effort not to acquire, whether by purchase, gift, bequest or exchange, any object or specimen unless the governing body or responsible officer is satisfied that the museum can acquire a valid title to the item in question.
 - 1.7. The museum will not undertake disposal motivated principally by financial reasons.

2. History of the collections

In 1799 the Company of Surgeons in London received the museum collection of the surgeon anatomist John Hunter (1728–93), which was purchased by the government and transferred into the care of the Company under the supervision of an independent Board of Trustees (The Hunterian Collection Board of Trustees). In 1800 the Company of Surgeons became the Royal College of Surgeons in London by a Charter of George III (subsequently amended by a Charter of 1843 to The Royal College of Surgeons of England). The Hunterian

Collection was incorporated into the College Museum, to which additions of objects, specimens were made throughout the 19th and early 20th century. In 1909 the College received on loan from the Royal Society of Medicine the museum collection of the Odontological Society of Great Britain: this loan was converted into a gift in 1941. Following destruction of a large part of the collection and of the original College building by bombing during the Second World War, a decision was taken to split the original College museum into four departments, each of which operated separate accession and/or disposal procedures. These were brought under a common management structure in the 1990s. From 2010 - 2017 the Museums and Archives came under the same Department.

3. An overview of current collections

This policy covers all material accessioned into the museum collections which can be summarised as follows:

Hunterian Collection: 3,758 specimens, mostly of human and comparative anatomy and pathology or natural history, together with 25 paintings and approximately 950 drawings, made or owned by John Hunter (1728-93), and included in the original transfer of 1799. The Hunterian Collection provides a comprehensive record of one of the most significant figures in the history of surgery and comparative anatomy and it gives a unique insight into the injuries and diseases that an 18th century surgeon treated. Hunterian artworks include paintings by George Stubbs (1724-1806) and Benjamin West (1738-1820). It includes items purchased by Hunter, such as a collection of 97 microscope slides prepared by William Hewson. Hunter's published works, surviving manuscripts and casebooks are held in the College Library. The collection is central to the Hunterian Museum displays, and the specimens have ongoing relevance to clinical, scientific and historical research.

College Museum Collection: 3602 items prepared by museum conservators such as Richard Owen (1804-1892), William Henry Flower (1831-99) and Arthur Keith (1866-1955) or acquired by the College by purchase, gift or exchange since 1800. The bulk of the collection is comparative anatomy, but there are also preparations of human anatomy, and approximately 200 objects, including teaching models, ceremonial items and objects personally associated with College members. The earliest specimens of human remains are from the upper Nile and date from between 2500 BCE and 500 CE and the John Evelyn's anatomical tables, the oldest known human anatomical preparations of their kind in Europe, date from the mid-17th century. The collection also includes a small number of modern specimens of human anatomy covered under the Human Tissue Act. Around 5% of the collection is displayed in the Hunterian Museum (from February 2023), including iconic dodo and moa skeletons, and specimens presented by important figures in the history of science, such as Charles Darwin (1809-1882) and Robert Koch (1843-1910). The rest of the collection is stored for use in temporary exhibitions, by loan and through research.

Odontological Collection: 12,536 items, mostly specimens or models of human and comparative dental anatomy and pathology acquired by the Odontological Society of Great Britain from the late 1850s, or by the College after the transfer of the Odontological Collection in 1909. Many specimens were donated by pioneers in dental surgery, such as John Tomes (1815-1895), while a sub-collection of approximately 1200 zoological and anatomical specimens came from renowned primatologist William Charles Osman Hill (1901-1975). The collection also contains important collections of archaeological human remains from Anglo-Saxon burial site excavations at Breedon-on-the-Hill in Leicestershire and Polhill in Kent. While a few items are displayed in the Hunterian Museum, the majority are in store and are used in research and teaching in a variety of disciplines, ranging from dentistry to zoology and bioarchaeology.

Historical Instrument Collection: A collection of 9,130 surgical or medical instruments dating from the 17th century to the present day, acquired by the College since the early 19th century. The collection illustrates the development of surgical instrumentation and includes sets of instruments or equipment owned by important figures in the history of surgery, such as Robert Liston (1794-1847), Joseph Lister (1827-1912), William Macewen (1848-1924) and Harold Gillies (1882-1960). Many instruments are displayed throughout the Hunterian Museum (from February 2023) and are also frequently used in temporary exhibitions and in formal education, particularly KS4 Medicine Through Time. The majority are held in store and are available for research.

Microscope Slide Collection: Over 16,000 microscopic preparations dating from the 18th century to the present, ranging from early fluid-filled, sealed glass vials to modern diagnostic histopathology slides. The collection demonstrates stunning biological diversity as well as an array of techniques developed by renowned preparators. The 12,000 slides produced or collected by Museum Conservator, Professor John Thomas Quekett (1815–1861) form an important sub-collection, and his slides include samples taken from Hunterian specimens that were destroyed by bombing during the Second World War. The Microscope Slide Collection is used in research, and in events targeted at professional and public audiences. Examples of slides are displayed in the Hunterian Museum and the collection has been the focus of temporary exhibitions.

Pathology Collection: 4,599 specimens of mostly human pathology, acquired by the College since 1800. The collection includes historical material from the collections of prominent surgeons such as Astley Cooper (1768–1841), some of which probably date to the late 18th century. The collection is mostly displayed in the RCSEng Anatomy and Pathology Museum and is used for surgical training through RCS courses and examinations, and by other qualified practitioners and students on recognised courses in medicine, nursing, allied health subjects, and related scientific/technical subjects. Some historical specimens (4% of the collection) are on public display in the Hunterian Museum. Specimens not on display are held in storage and are available for research.

Anatomy Collection: 1150 specimens or models of human anatomy, including a small number dating from the late 19th century. Most are post-1950 accessions and the majority of the collection is covered by the Human Tissue Act. The collection is used in professional surgical and medical training and is displayed in the RCSEng Anatomy and Pathology Museum (from April 2022). A small number of anatomical models are displayed in the Hunterian Museum.

Special Collections: This includes objects of historic, artistic or architectural significance acquired by the College since 1800, including a small number of items which were formerly the property of the College's predecessor body, the Company of Surgeons in London (1745–99). It comprises 3,576 works of fine and decorative art, including paintings, drawings, prints, photographs and sculpture, some of which date from the 16th century. The majority of the collection consists of portraits of surgeons or patrons associated with the College or its predecessor bodies; prominent figures in the history of British surgery, medicine and the sciences; works depicting the College buildings and other places associated with British surgery and medicine; and works depicting surgical procedures, pathological or anatomical features; surgical patients; and natural history. Artists represented in the collections include Hans Holbein the Younger (1497-1543), William Hogarth (1697-1764) and Joshua Reynolds (1723-1792). Special collections also include historic silver (325 items), medals (231 items), furniture (118 items) and ceramics, including drug jars (122 items). Special Collections are displayed in the Hunterian Museum (from February 2023) and throughout the College building.

Handling Collections: The museum holds small collections of un-accessioned items for use in demonstration and handling during formal and informal learning and outreach events. The

nature of some items e.g replicas, duplicates or explanatory material lie outside the RCSEng's collecting policy.

4. Themes and priorities for future collecting

- 4.1. Acquisition will only be undertaken if the material has demonstrable potential use in engagement, learning and/or research, and also meets the collection-specific criteria detailed below.
- 4.2. The **Hunterian Collection**, the **Odontological Collection** and the **Microscope Slide Collection** are not priorities for collecting.
- 4.3. The **College Museum Collection** is subject to collecting in the following areas:
 - 4.3.1. Artefacts (other than instruments) associated with surgical and dental research or training, including the basic sciences of anatomy, pathology, physiology and histology, particularly where these are related to the College's own activities or to its members.
 - 4.3.2. Other artefacts, including photographs and film, associated with the history of the College and the Company of Surgeons.
 - 4.3.3 Artefacts, including photographs and film, associated with the experiences and treatment of surgical patients.
- 4.4. The **Instrument Collection** is subject to collecting in the following areas:
 - 4.4.1. Surgical or dental instruments and associated medical devices associated with the College's activities as a teaching or research institution.
 - 4.4.2. Instruments and associated medical devices associated with important figures in the history of the College or the history of surgery in the UK/Britain with especial reference to England, Wales and Northern Ireland.
 - 4.4.3. Instruments and associated medical devices associated with the development of surgical practice, research or training from ancient times to the present day.
 - 4.4.4. Instruments and associated medical devices intended to support the permanent displays relating to the history or current practice of surgery within the Hunterian Museum.
- 4.5. The **Special Collections** are subject to collecting and/or commissioning in the following areas:
 - 4.5.1. Existing portraits (individual or group) representing key figures in the history or current practice of surgery in UK/Britain with especial reference to England, Wales and Northern Ireland, or associated with the work of the College.
 - 4.5.2. Commissioned Presidential and Council Portraits.
 - 4.5.3. Representations of surgeons at work, especially those showing the diversity of the profession; of the College buildings and its professional work; and of surgical patients, where these are relevant to the history or current practice of surgery.
- 4.6. The **Pathology** and **Anatomy Collections** are subject to collecting and/or commissioning in the following areas, and, where applicable in accordance with the Human Tissue Act 2004:
 - 4.6.1. Recent (less than 100 years) specimens illustrating normal or pathological human anatomy for specific educational purposes.
 - 4.6.2. Specimens over 100 years old illustrating normal or pathological human anatomy.
 - 4.6.3. 'Specimens' include – but are not limited to – prosected regions, bones, body parts in fluids, plastinated remains, and microscope slides.

5. Themes and priorities for rationalisation and disposal

- 5.1 The museum recognises that the principles on which priorities for rationalisation and disposal are determined will be through a formal review process that identifies which collections are included and excluded from the review. The outcome of review and any subsequent rationalisation will not reduce the quality or significance of the collection and will result in a more useable, well managed collection.
- 5.2 The procedures used will meet professional standards. The process will be documented, open and transparent. There will be clear communication with key stakeholders about the outcomes and the process.
- 5.3 The following areas will be considered for rationalisation and disposal:
 - 5.3.1 Items from the Instrument Collection that have been identified as duplicates (i.e. they have the same function, designer, maker and production date).
 - 5.3.2 Items from the Special Collections in the following areas:
 - Items assigned RCSSC/C catalogue numbers in 2007 but not featured in Negus's 1967 Artistic Possessions of the College, including Ceramics (dinner plates and toby jugs)
 - Furniture and architectural fittings that have no potential to be used or displayed in the redesigned College building.
 - 5.3.3 We will seek to undertake rationalisation of items from the College Museum Collection that should have been categorised as gifts to the College rather than catalogued as museum objects, such as presentation plaques from visiting international Colleges.
- 5.4 Disposals will also be undertaken for legal, safety or care and conservation reasons, for example, spoliation, radiation, infestation, or repatriation.

6 Legal and ethical framework for acquisition and disposal of items

- 6.1 The museum recognises its responsibility to work within the parameters of the Museum Association Code of Ethics when considering acquisition and disposal.

7 Collecting policies of other museums

- 7.1 The museum will take account of the collecting policies of other museums and other organisations collecting in the same or related areas or subject fields. It will consult with these organisations where conflicts of interest may arise or to define areas of specialism, in order to avoid unnecessary duplication and waste of resources.
- 7.2 Specific reference is made to the following museum(s)/organisation(s):
 - 7.2.1. Other medical royal colleges.
 - 7.2.2. Members of the London Museums of Health and Medicine Group.
 - 7.2.3. Members of the UK Medical Collections Group.
 - 7.2.4. Members of the European Association of Museums of the History of Medical Sciences.
 - 7.2.5. The Natural History Museum, the Science Museum and the British Museum

8 Acquisition

8.1 The policy for agreeing acquisitions is:

The decision to acquire any object, whether by donation, bequest or purchase (subject to available budget), is made by the Director of Museums and Special Collections in accordance with the Collections Development Policy and in consultation with other museum staff. Procedures for object entry, transfer of title and accessioning are outlined in the Documentation Procedural Manual.

8.2 The museum will not acquire any object or specimen unless it is satisfied that the object or specimen has not been acquired in, or exported from, its country of origin (or any intermediate country in which it may have been legally owned) in violation of that country's laws. (For the purposes of this paragraph 'country of origin' includes the United Kingdom).

8.3 In accordance with the provisions of the UNESCO 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, which the UK ratified with effect from November 1 2002, and the Dealing in Cultural Objects (Offences) Act 2003, the museum will reject any items that have been illicitly traded. The governing body will be guided by the national guidance on the responsible acquisition of cultural property issued by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport in 2005.

9 Human remains

10.1 As the museum holds or intends to acquire human remains under 100 years old, it will obtain the necessary licence under the Human Tissue Act 2004 and any subordinate legislation from time to time in force.

10.2 As the museum holds or intends to acquire human remains from any period, it will follow the procedures in the 'Guidance for the care of human remains in museums' DCMS, 2005.

11 Biological and geological material

11.1 So far as biological and geological material is concerned, the museum will not acquire by any direct or indirect means any specimen that has been collected, sold or otherwise transferred in contravention of any national or international wildlife protection or natural history conservation law or treaty of the United Kingdom or any other country, except with the express consent of an appropriate outside authority.

12 Archaeological material

12.1 The museum will not acquire archaeological material (including excavated ceramics) in any case where the governing body or responsible officer has any suspicion that the circumstances of their recovery involved a failure to follow the appropriate legal procedures.

12.2 In England, Wales and Northern Ireland the procedures include reporting finds to the landowner or occupier of the land and to the proper authorities in the case of

possible treasure (i.e. the Coroner for Treasure) as set out in the Treasure Act 1996 (as amended by the Coroners & Justice Act 2009).

13 Exceptions

13.1 Any exceptions to the above clauses will only be because the museum is:

- acting as an externally approved repository of last resort for material of local (UK) origin
- acting with the permission of authorities with the requisite jurisdiction in the country of origin

In these cases the museum will be open and transparent in the way it makes decisions and will act only with the express consent of an appropriate outside authority. The museum will document when these exceptions occur.

14 Spoliation

14.1 The museum will use the statement of principles 'Spoliation of Works of Art during the Nazi, Holocaust and World War II period', issued for non-national museums in 1999 by the Museums and Galleries Commission.

15 The Repatriation and Restitution of objects and human remains

- 15.1 The museum's governing bodies (RCSEng Council and the Hunterian Collection Trustees, in relation to the Hunterian Collection), acting on the advice of the museum's professional staff, if any, may take a decision to return human remains (unless covered by the 'Guidance for the care of human remains in museums' issued by DCMS in 2005), objects or specimens to a country or people of origin. The museum will take such decisions on a case by case basis; within its legal position and taking into account all ethical implications and available guidance. This will mean that the procedures described in 16.1-5 will be followed but the remaining procedures are not appropriate.
- 15.2 The disposal of human remains from museums in England, Northern Ireland and Wales will follow the procedures in the 'Guidance for the care of human remains in museums, DCMS, 2005'.

16 Disposal procedures

- 16.1 All disposals will be undertaken with reference to the SPECTRUM Primary Procedures on disposal.
- 16.2 The governing bodies (RCSEng Council and the Hunterian Collection Trustees, in relation to the Hunterian Collection) will confirm that it is legally free to dispose of an item. Agreements on disposal made with donors will also be taken into account.
- 16.3 When disposal of a museum object is being considered, the museum will establish if it was acquired with the aid of an external funding organisation. In such cases, any

conditions attached to the original grant will be followed. This may include repayment of the original grant and a proportion of the proceeds if the item is disposed of by sale.

- 16.4 When disposal is motivated by curatorial reasons the procedures outlined below will be followed and the method of disposal may be by gift, sale, exchange or as a last resort - destruction.
- 16.5 The decision to dispose of material from the collections will be taken by the governing bodies only after full consideration of the reasons for disposal. Other factors including public benefit, the implications for the museum's collections and for collections held by museums and other organisations collecting the same material or in related fields will be considered. Expert advice will be obtained and the views of stakeholders such as donors, researchers, local and source communities and others served by the museum will also be sought.
- 16.6 A decision to dispose of a specimen or object, whether by gift, exchange, sale or destruction (in the case of an item too badly damaged or deteriorated to be of any use for the purposes of the collections or for reasons of health and safety), will be the responsibility of the governing bodies of the museum acting on the advice of professional curatorial staff, if any, and not of the curator or manager of the collection acting alone.
- 16.7 Once a decision to dispose of material in the collection has been taken, priority will be given to retaining it within the public domain. It will therefore be offered in the first instance, by gift or sale, directly to other Accredited museums likely to be interested in its acquisition.
- 16.8 If the material is not acquired by any Accredited museum to which it was offered as a gift or for sale, then the museum community at large will be advised of the intention to dispose of the material normally through a notice on the MA's Find an Object web listing service, an announcement in the Museums Association's Museums Journal or in other specialist publications and websites (if appropriate).
- 16.9 The announcement relating to gift or sale will indicate the number and nature of specimens or objects involved, and the basis on which the material will be transferred to another institution. Preference will be given to expressions of interest from other Accredited Museums. A period of at least two months will be allowed for an interest in acquiring the material to be expressed. At the end of this period, if no expressions of interest have been received, the museum may consider disposing of the material to other interested individuals and organisations giving priority to organisations in the public domain.
- 16.10 Any monies received by the museum governing body from the disposal of items will be applied solely and directly for the benefit of the collections. This normally means the purchase of further acquisitions. In exceptional cases, improvements relating to the care of collections in order to meet or exceed Accreditation requirements relating to the risk of damage to and deterioration of the collections may be justifiable. Any monies received in compensation for the damage, loss or destruction of items will be applied in the same way. Advice on those cases where the monies are intended to be used for the care of collections will be sought from the Arts Council England.

- 16.11 The proceeds of a sale will be allocated so it can be demonstrated that they are spent in a manner compatible with the requirements of the Accreditation standard. Money must be restricted to the long-term sustainability, use and development of the collection.
- 16.12 Full records will be kept of all decisions on disposals and the items involved and proper arrangements made for the preservation and/or transfer, as appropriate, of the documentation relating to the items concerned, including photographic records where practicable in accordance with SPECTRUM Procedure on deaccession and disposal.

Disposal by exchange

- 16.13 The nature of disposal by exchange means that the museum will not necessarily be in a position to exchange the material with another Accredited museum. The governing bodies will therefore ensure that issues relating to accountability and impartiality are carefully considered to avoid undue influence on its decision-making process.
- 16.13.1 In cases where the governing bodies wish for sound curatorial reasons to exchange material directly with Accredited or non-Accredited museums, with other organisations or with individuals, the procedures in paragraphs 16.1-5 will apply.
- 16.13.2 If the exchange is proposed to be made with a specific Accredited museum, other Accredited museums which collect in the same or related areas will be directly notified of the proposal and their comments will be requested.
- 16.13.3 If the exchange is proposed with a non-Accredited museum, with another type of organisation or with an individual, the museum will place a notice on the MA's Find an Object web listing service, or make an announcement in the Museums Association's Museums Journal or in other specialist publications and websites (if appropriate).
- 16.13.4 Both the notification and announcement must provide information on the number and nature of the specimens or objects involved both in the museum's collection and those intended to be acquired in exchange. A period of at least two months must be allowed for comments to be received. At the end of this period, the governing bodies must consider the comments before a final decision on the exchange is made.

Disposal by destruction

- 16.14 If it is not possible to dispose of an object through transfer or sale, the governing bodies may decide to destroy it.
- 16.15 It is acceptable to destroy material of low intrinsic significance (duplicate mass-produced articles or common specimens which lack significant provenance) where no alternative method of disposal can be found.

- 16.16 Destruction is also an acceptable method of disposal in cases where an object is in extremely poor condition, has high associated health and safety risks or is part of an approved destructive testing request identified in an organisation's research policy.
- 16.17 Where necessary, specialist advice will be sought to establish the appropriate method of destruction. Health and safety risk assessments will be carried out by trained staff where required.
- 16.18 The destruction of objects should be witnessed by an appropriate member of the museum workforce. In circumstances where this is not possible, e.g. the destruction of controlled substances, a police certificate should be obtained and kept in the relevant object history file.