

Museums and Archives Learning and Access Policy

Collections: The Museums and Archives of The Royal College of Surgeons of England, including Deposited and Corporate Archives; the Hunterian Collection; the College Museum; the Wellcome Museum of Anatomy and Pathology; the Odontological Collection; the Historical Instrument Collection; the Special Collections, and associated reserve collections.

Governing body: The Council of the Royal College of Surgeons of England ('the College') / The Board of Trustees of the Hunterian Collection

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1. Scope and purpose

1.1. The College holds collections of outstanding medical, scientific, historical and cultural significance. It aims to use these collections:

- 1.1.1. To support the College Mission in the education, training and continuing professional development (CPD) of surgeons at every stage of their careers with the aim of advancing surgical standards and in accordance with the Charter, Standing Orders and Ordinances of The College
- 1.1.2. To enhance the College's reputation by raising awareness of surgeons and their work in society.
- 1.1.3. To aid the professional work of the College by providing training resources.
- 1.1.4. To facilitate and generate excellent medical, scientific, historical and other research.

1.2. This policy sets out the principles and practice that will deliver learning and access to all users as core Museums and Archives functions.

1.3. This policy is complemented by the *Museums and Archives Learning and Access Strategic Objectives* (2012-15) and the *Collections Management Policy* (2012).

1.4. This policy is supported by the College's customer service standards and *Equality and Diversity Policy* (under review) and upholds the College's responsibilities in respect of the Equality Act 2010, Human Tissue Act 2004, Data Protection Act 1998 and other statutory workplace legislation.

2. Learning and access principles

- 2.1. The College aims to promote an understanding of the history and modern practice of surgery and its associated disciplines through learning opportunities that are accessible, inspiring, thought-provoking and sustainable presented in an environment that is comfortable, secure and enjoyable for all our users.
- 2.2. The benefits of access to the collection will be considered within the context of a strategic, risk management approach to collections care as detailed in the *Museums and Archives Conservation and Collections Care Policy* (2012).
- 2.3. The College will strive to provide a wide-ranging service to all Museums and Archives users, whether physical or virtual, within the physical constraints of the building, the College's legal framework, the availability of resources and the integrity of the collections.
- 2.4. The College will employ professionally qualified and experienced staff to implement the learning and access policy and provide appropriate training to paid and voluntary staff. Where skills are not available in-house, resources will be sought for external expertise.
- 2.5. Herein 'access' is considered to be made possible when physical, sensory, intellectual, cultural, social, attitudinal, financial and technological barriers are removed, enabling visitors to engage with and respond to the collections.
- 2.6. Herein 'disability' is defined using the social model: that is, societal barriers that make people disabled, rather than their particular medical conditions or impairments.
- 2.7. Museums and Archives work with the College's Access Working Party and the Public Access Consultation Panel to make collections and services open and accessible to all visitors.
- 2.8. Learning and access needs, risks and activities will be communicated within Museums and Archives (weekly) and reported to the Board of Trustees of the Hunterian Collection (quarterly) and the Museums and Archives Committee (triannually).
- 2.9. Access to Museums and Archives collections and expertise for educational and research purposes will be provided free of charge where feasible, especially to Fellows, Members, Associates and Affiliates. However, charges may apply to cover staff and space costs.

3. Audience research and consultation

- 3.1. Audience representatives will be involved in a continued process of consultation, research and evaluation in the development of learning and access provision and other Museums and Archives projects.
- 3.2. Museums and Archives will work with core learning audiences (see 5.1 below) when piloting new learning and access events and activities and will evaluate and make changes as necessary.
- 3.3. All participants in undergraduate and post-graduate medical and dental training, professional development, formal and informal learning activities (both students and teachers/tutors) will have an opportunity to comment on their experiences and the Museums and Archives staff will be responsive to their feedback. These mechanisms will be monitored by the Head of Learning and Access.
- 3.4. All visitors, real, virtual or potential, can provide feedback in the College (verbally, in writing or via questionnaires provided), or online through the Museums and Archives web pages.
- 3.5. Museums and Archives will undertake research to identify new audiences and to work with them to determine how their learning and access needs can be met.

4. Access

4.1. Physical/sensory access:

- 4.1.1. Museums and Archives will provide a welcoming and friendly environment that is accessible to all visitors.
- 4.1.2. Public areas of the Museums and Archives will be made as accessible to visitors with physical or sensory disabilities as possible and alternative access to collections in museum stores and working areas will be made where possible.
- 4.1.3. Ways of accessing collections dedicated to users with particular needs will be provided when possible, and resources will be prioritized to this end.
- 4.1.4. Written information and printed resources will be available in a range of alternative formats, and sub-titles or a script provided for audio presentations.
- 4.1.5. Established sector guidelines and standards will be used in the production of text panels, gallery guides, catalogues, leaflets and other printed material.
- 4.1.6. Access will be extended to museums (and archives where possible) through weekend opening and evening events.
- 4.1.7. Handling opportunities will be provided where it is safe to do so and where resources are available, especially for family audiences and learning groups. For details of hands-on access for researchers, see the *Museums and Archives Research Policy* (2012).

4.2. Intellectual access:

- 4.2.1. Work will continue to improve the intellectual accessibility of the Museums and Archives collections, particularly with regards to labelling and text panels.
- 4.2.2. Temporary exhibitions and displays in public areas of the College will be researched and developed to be of interest and accessible to non-specialist, as well as specialist audiences.
- 4.2.3. Museums will provide live interpretation of the collections through tours where resources permit.

4.3. Social/attitudinal/cultural access:

- 4.3.1. Access needs of visitors from different social and cultural backgrounds will be considered across the work of the Museums and Archives.
- 4.3.2. Collections will be made available to improve visitors' understanding of disease, injury and surgical treatment through exhibitions and events.
- 4.3.3. Hunterian Museum visitors will be encouraged to become better informed about their health and to be more involved in making decisions about their medical treatment.
- 4.3.4. Opportunities will be provided for dialogue between the public and the surgical profession through events and exhibitions.

4.4. Technological access:

- 4.4.1. The potential of ICT and new media to reach new audiences, including non-visitors, will be explored in conjunction with relevant College departments and in accordance with the College's multi-media strategy.
- 4.4.2. Established sector guidelines and standards (especially BS 8878: 2010 *Web Accessibility Code of Practice*) will be followed to ensure that the Museums and Archives website and on-site terminals are accessible to as many visitors as possible.

5. Learning

The College seeks to provide visitors with access to learning opportunities that are appropriate to their individual learning needs, while working within the limits of its financial and staff resources. Four core learning areas have been identified: formal learning, informal learning, medical and dental training and learning for life.

- 5.1. For students and teachers/tutors in formal learning organisations (from the UK or overseas) from Key Stage 3 to postgraduate level in a range of disciplines including biomedical and forensic science, medical art, history and archaeology, the College will:
 - 5.1.1. Provide a regular programme of facilitated workshop activities for Key Stage 3 and 4 History of Medicine students using the museums, archives and library collections.
 - 5.1.2. Provide a regular programme of surgical skills workshops for Key Stage 4 and 5 school students interested in a career in medicine or dentistry.
 - 5.1.3. Support school and HE/FE visits by providing guided tours of the Hunterian (and Wellcome Museum where appropriate), using volunteers where possible to deliver the tours.
 - 5.1.4. Create resources that are relevant to the current curriculum for schools to support self-guided visits to the Hunterian Museum for a range of subject areas.
 - 5.1.5. Encourage Higher Education groups to use the Museums and Archives collections for teaching and research.
- 5.2. For adults involved in informal learning through organisations such as U3A, WEA and local adult education providers (including local history groups, medical historical societies and local community and social groups), the College will:
 - 5.2.1. Promote guided tours and talks for groups and where possible to tailor these to suit the background knowledge or specialist interest of the visitor.
 - 5.2.2. Provide the audio-guide and audio-described tour as a resource for groups visiting the Hunterian Museum.
 - 5.2.3. Maintain a varied public programme of events, including lectures, gallery talks, hands-on workshops and evening experiences drawing widely on the Museums and Archives collections for inspiration.
 - 5.2.4. Support family history research by providing access to archives and library collections onsite and information about online resources.
- 5.3. For medical and dental students, Fellows, Members, Associates and Affiliates, other qualified professionals in training posts, and consultants engaged in continuing professional development (from the UK or overseas), the College will:
 - 5.3.1. Raise the profile of the Museums and Archives collections and the resources and facilities it can offer to surgical trainees, Fellows, Members, Associates and Affiliates of the College, especially by supporting Education courses and other postgraduate training programmes.
 - 5.3.2. Expand the Wellcome Museum of Anatomy and Pathology offer as part of the College's training and CPD strategic objectives, including dedicated events.
 - 5.3.3. Increase access to the museums and surgical information resources collections through extended opening hours in the weekends and evenings.
 - 5.3.4. Integrate the Wellcome Museum with other surgical information resources to develop an integrated training offer.
 - 5.3.5. Establish the Wellcome Museum within the College a centre of excellence for anatomical and pathological learning.
- 5.4. For a diverse 'learning for life' audience including individuals, families with children, tourists (both UK and overseas) and groups of friends/colleagues visiting the Museums and Archives, engaging with the collections and participating in the public programmes the College will:

- 5.4.1. Develop and train our volunteer team to deliver guided tours and to interpret the displays for Hunterian Museum visitors.
- 5.4.2. Maintain a varied public programme of events, including lectures, gallery talks, hands-on workshops and evening experiences drawing widely on the Museums and Archives collections for inspiration.
- 5.4.3. Continue to provide an interesting and stimulating range of products in the College shop that will encourage visitors of all ages and abilities to extend their learning from the Museums and Archives collections.

6. Exhibitions

- 6.1. The College will maintain and where necessary refresh the permanent exhibitions in the Hunterian Museum to promote the past, present and future of surgery.
- 6.2. The College will adapt the Wellcome Museum of Anatomy and Pathology according to the training needs of medical and dental students, Fellows, Members, Associates and Affiliates, other qualified professionals in training posts, and consultants engaged in continuing professional development.
- 6.3. Human remains will be exhibited with dignity, sensitivity and respect, in accordance with the Human Tissue Authority's *Code of Practice: Public Display* (2009); an explanation of the College's approach to display will be provided (see appendix below).
- 6.4. A programme of temporary exhibitions in the Qvist Gallery, the Library, and elsewhere will be staged (maintaining high standards of design and interpretation):
 - 6.4.1. To showcase the stored collections.
 - 6.4.2. To reflect current practice in surgery and allied fields.
 - 6.4.3. To mark significant historical anniversaries.
 - 6.4.4. To complement programming and events.
 - 6.4.5. To attract members of College's core audiences who might not otherwise visit.
 - 6.4.6. To display outputs of pro-active strategic partnership projects. Potential external partners' proposals for temporary exhibitions will be considered within the College's stated objectives and business planning, and will only be embarked upon with appropriate resourcing.

7. Marketing and commercial access

- 7.1. The public profile of Museums and Archives will be maintained through appropriate use of media coverage, direct advertising and the production of print materials, as resources allow.
- 7.2. Liaising with the relevant College departments, information technologies and social media will be used effectively to promote Museums and Archives and to provide accurate and up-to-date information for visitors following established sector guidelines and standards (especially BS 8878: 2010 *Web Accessibility Code of Practice*).
- 7.3. Relevant professional and academic partnerships will be exploited to extend contact with a range of potential visitors.
- 7.4. Training will be provided for staff and stakeholders to undertake media activities when required.
- 7.5. Where possible, learning and engagement activities will be cost neutral, and/or funding will be raised from external sources.
- 7.6. Access to Museums and Archives collections and expertise may be granted for commercial purposes by the Director of Museums and Archives – including venue hire, image use, filming or licensing – where there is minimal risk to the integrity of the collections, the reputation of the College or its intellectual property rights. Charges will be levied.

- 7.7. Commercial access is subject to the approval of the Museums and Archives Committee when there is significant risk or resource implications; filming and photography of the Hunterian Collection is subject to the approval of the Board of Trustees of the Hunterian Collection.

Appendix: Hunterian Museum Philosophy of Display

The Hunterian Museum houses a renowned collection of human remains gathered by John Hunter 250 years ago and by generations of anatomists since.

The Royal College of Surgeons of England provides free access so that we may all learn about the history of surgery. Part of this fascinating story is the way anatomists gathered human remains – very differently to the ways medical museums collect today.

These remains, together with many thousands more in our research collections, continue to reveal biomedical secrets about health and disease. We want to use them to record rare conditions and to help patients today.

But human remains are much more than scientific data: these fascinating objects were once people. Some visitors may therefore find them unnerving, even distressing, especially those that were very young, or lived with disease and difference. We know who some of them were, but not all: where we have information, it is available on our online database (<http://surgicat.rcseng.ac.uk>).

Because of the sensitivity of what is on display here we ask that you do not photograph or film. Where appropriate, images can be downloaded from the database.

It is with enormous respect for the dead that the Royal College of Surgeons of England maintains this collection to provide clinical and educational benefit for the living.