



SURGEONS' HALL
MUSEUMS

Surgeons' Hall Museums Collections Management Framework

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Contents

Contents	1
Section One	2
Collections Management Framework Overview	2
Section Two.....	4
Collections Development Policy.....	4
Section Three.....	15
Collections Information Policy	15
Section Four.....	19
Collections Access Policy	19
Section Five.....	22
Collections Care Policy	22



Section One

Collections Management Framework Overview

Purpose

1. This suite of documents provides a framework for cohesive collection management policies across all areas of Surgeons' Hall Museums (the Museum). It includes policy statements that contextualise collection management within the broader mission of the Museum, establishing principles that guide the care, management, access, and development of the collections.

Context

The Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh

2. Surgeons' Hall Museums is owned by the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh (RCSEd). RCSEd is dedicated to promoting the highest standards in surgical and dental education, training and clinical practice. Its mission is to foster and promote research with the aim of improving human health.

Surgeons' Hall Museums - Vision, Purpose, and Mission

3. In 2024, the Heritage Department defined the following Vision, Purpose and Mission for the Museum, Library and Archive collections:
 4. Vision: to foster a global community, committed to learning from the past to achieve positive advancements in the field of surgery today, enhancing lives for generations to come.
 5. Purpose: to develop, preserve, and share the Museum, Library and Archive collections and resources in transparent and innovative ways to inspire curiosity, foster learning, and contribute to the ongoing dialogue about the impact of surgery on society.
 6. Mission: to further meaningful engagement with the Museum, Library, and Archive collections and resources at the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh. We will achieve this through:
 - Information services
We will be a valued clinical information resource and service for our global surgical and dental Members, across all specialties, supporting working practices and enhancing continued professional development, acting as a significant benefit for subscribing Members. Additionally, we will provide a historical enquiry service across a range of audiences.
 - Innovative and impactful programming
Through impactful programming we will engage and inspire people onsite and online with innovative story telling in exhibitions, displays, and digital content as well as carefully developed learning and event programmes, engaging across audiences with diverse ages, backgrounds, interests, and learning needs.

- Research and dissemination
We will recognise, develop, and share the collections as a crucial resource for learning about the history of surgery, surgical pathologies, as well as the social histories of medical professionals and patients.
- Collection development
We will preserve, develop, and share a comprehensive historical collection that seeks to document, reflect, and enhance the understanding of the entire history of The Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh and its place within the wider history of surgery, dentistry, and medicine. Through a programme of reviews and contemporary collecting, we will ensure the collections continue to reflect past, present and future advancements in surgery.

Policy Statement

7. This Collections Management Framework establishes effective policies to ensure an integrated, best practice approach to developing, caring for, and sharing the collections. It is informed by applicable legislation, best practice culture sector guidance including the Collections Trust SEPCTRUM 5.1 Procedures. It underpins all activities undertaken by Museum teams and informs processes and protocols set out in the Museum's Documentation Procedures Manual.

Framework

8. This Framework comprises the following complementary policies, each supporting a different aspect of effective collections management:
 - Collection Development Policy
 - Collections Information Policy
 - Collections Access Policy
 - Collections Care Policy.

Scope

9. This Framework extends across all Museum collections. The collections hold both Accreditation and Recognition status and include:
 - The History of Surgery Collection
 - The Pathology Collection
 - The Dental Collection.

External Factors and Standards

10. This Framework has been developed in alignment with current legislation, as well as cultural heritage sector guidelines and standards to ensure the responsible and compliant management of the collections.

Review

11. This Collection Management Framework and all integrated policies will be reviewed by the Museum's Teams and the RCSEd Heritage Committee on a four-year basis or where there is a significant change in external or internal standards or activities.



Section Two

Collections Development Policy

Purpose of Policy

1. Surgeons' Hall Museums is part of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh (RCSEd). The stated Charitable Purpose of the RCSEd are: "the advancement of education", "the advancement of health", "the advancement of the arts, heritage, culture or science". These purposes are furthered by the work of Surgeons' Hall Museums. The Museums' dedicated mission, vision, and purpose is set out in Section One of this Collections Management framework, pages 2-3.
2. This policy guides Surgeons' Hall Museums collections development. It provides an overview of the existing collections, establishes themes and priorities for development through reviews, acquisitions, and where appropriate disposals. It establishes protocols for acquisitions, loans, and disposals and sets out the relevant ethical and legal frameworks for collection-related processes. Detailed collection procedures are available in the Museum's Documentation Procedures Manual.
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 Museum's governing body 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.
4. 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.
5. The Museum will undertake due diligence and make every effort not to acquire, whether by purchase, gift, bequest or exchange, any collection item unless the governing body or responsible officer is satisfied that the Museum can acquire a valid title to the item in question.
6. The Museum will ensure that acquisition and disposal are carried out openly and with transparency.
7. Acquisitions outside the current stated policy will only be made in exceptional circumstances.
8. The Museum will not undertake disposal motivated principally by financial reasons.

Governance

9. Surgeons' Hall Museums is part of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh (RCSEd). For the purposes of good governance and Museum Accreditation, the RCSEd Heritage Committee acts as the Museum's governing body.
10. Delegated by the RCSEd Trustee Board, it provides strategic oversight of the Museum's collections and heritage resources, ensuring they are held in trust for public benefit including maintaining accountability for ethical, legal and professional standards in the stewardship and long-term care, development and use of the Museum's collection.
11. The Heritage Committee operates in line with all relevant legal and ethical standards governing the management of the collections, including RCSEd's charitable purposes, the UK Museum Accreditation Scheme, Surgeons' Hall Museums' Recognised Collections status, and the statutory requirements associated with the listed building designation of the Museums. Where required, the Heritage Committee makes recommendations to the Trustee Board for final approval.

Collecting Remit and Collection Overview

History of the Collections

12. RCSEd was founded in 1505, with the Museums' collections growing significantly from 1699 after 'natural and artificial curiosities' were publicly sought. In the 1800s, the original Museum expanded to include the remarkable collections of surgeon and anatomists, Sir Charles Bell and John Barclay. Originally developed as a teaching collection for students of medicine the collections have been on display to the public since 1832.
13. The collections continued to grow mainly by donations from Fellows of the College and acquisition by previous Conservators. It contains one of the largest and most historic collections of surgical pathology in the world and in addition includes surgical instruments, artefacts, College memorabilia and works of art. The collection was again strengthened by the donation of the significant dental collection established by Menzies Campbell in 1964.

Collections Today

14. Today the collections comprise of around 25,000 objects. The entire collection has been deemed a collection of National Significance gaining Recognised status in 2009. The core selection is divided into sections set out below.

Wohl Pathology Museum Collections (Human Remains)

15. The pathology collections make up the majority of the collections and represent one of the largest and historic collections of surgical pathology in the world. It has been built up by many generations of RCSEd Fellows and Conservators to further the educational opportunities for surgical students and members of the College, but it was also from its earliest times open to members of the public to improve public understanding of medicine.

History of Surgery Collections

16. The history of surgery collections contain a unique collection of surgical instruments and medical equipment dating from mid-17th century through to current day. The collection also holds artwork both portraits of prominent surgeons and anatomical/pathological. Diagnostic and teaching material including, x-rays, slides, models and photographs add significantly to the collection. College memorabilia including furniture, silverware, robes and medals represent the history of the Royal College and its Members. Key themes in this area include the beginnings of surgery, the development from trade to profession, the College and Scotland's' contribution to the development of surgery and medicine, military surgery, surgical techniques and surgical instrumentation.

Dental Museum Collections

17. The core of the dental collection was bequeathed by the dental historian John Menzies Campbell. It represents the development of dentistry from the earliest times through to modern day and is one of the finest in the UK. It holds dental instruments, artefacts, prints, paintings, engravings and models.

Themes and Priorities for Future Collecting

18. The Museum will consider acquisitions that fall within its collection remit. Acquisitions will be made where they add new information, be it historic or contemporary, to ensure collections are well balanced across its many themes, and up to date with surgical innovations and techniques as well as patient stories.
19. Acquisitions which have a provenance linked to the College, or to prominent surgical practitioners, particularly female surgeons will be given priority.
20. The Museum's Access Policy outlines the process for engaging audiences, as key stakeholders, to gather feedback and understand their needs. Insights from these surveys inform acquisition decisions, ensuring that new additions to the collection align with and enhance the value they bring to meet these identified needs.

Early Surgical Instruments 1500-1800

21. While RCSEd was founded in 1505, the history of surgery goes back further with the early work of ancient Greece and prehistoric surgical procedures. Therefore, the Museum would like to develop the early surgical collections aiming specifically for the period of the 16th century or earlier to the 18th century.

Surgical Innovations

22. The Museum aims to promote recent and current surgical innovations and techniques. This contemporary collecting activity can be difficult in the fast ever changing developing profession of surgery. There are gaps in key areas such as laparoscopic and endoscopic surgical equipment and instruments, which we aim to fill. Current and past developments in robotic surgery will be a key area of collecting focus.

Teaching and Training Collections

23. The Museum would like to develop key areas of surgical teaching including models, training devices, artworks and instruments. This is a broad area, and the collections could benefit from objects dating from the 19th century to present but priority will be given to those with a connection to the College and or Fellows of the College.

Military Surgery

24. The Museums military surgery collection is particularly impressive and important in representing the advancements made from surgery during conflict. We will actively collect material relating to any military conflict but would prioritise conflicts after World War Two to improve and strengthen modern military surgery interpretation.

Women in Surgery

25. The first women to qualify in surgery in connection to the College was Alice Ker in 1886 but it was not until 1920 that the first female Fellow of the College was admitted. In 1967 there were still only nine practicing female surgeons in Britain. Therefore, women in surgery in comparison to the Colleges 500-year history is a relatively recent subject. For this reason, the representation of women in the collection is sparse and underrepresented. The Museum is actively seeking any objects which relate to women in surgery.

Dental Collections

26. The dental collections are strong in most areas of development until the mid-20th century. Therefore, there is a focus on collecting 20th century advances in dentistry including equipment, instruments and diagnostic devices. A priority for collecting in this area is objects relating to orthodontics which is now one of the leading specialisms in dentistry but due to its 20th century and 21st century development it is not represented in the current collections. Another priority will be given to diagnostics, artworks and photography highlighting dental problems which will enable the collections to have a visual representative of dental problems requiring treatment.

Pathological and Histological Collections (Human Remains)

27. The Museum is legally authorised to collect and display human remains. Due to changes in how the collections were utilised, the Museum stopped collecting Human Remains in 2000 and therefore has a presumption against further collecting in this area. However, new acquisitions can be carefully considered on a case-by-case basis and accepted only when they offer opportunities to provide insight into historical or contemporary medical challenges, advancements in understanding the human body, or well-documented patient stories, and when they meet strict ethical and legal requirements.

Themes and priorities for rationalisation and disposal

28. 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 review. The outcome of the 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.
29. Priorities for collections rationalisation are determined through a formal review process. This process will identify which collections are to be included and excluded from consideration. The review, along with any subsequent rationalization disposals, will ensure that the collection's quality and significance are maintained, resulting in a more accessible and effectively managed collection.
30. 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.

31. Areas highlighted for future rationalisation processes include the art collection. The art collection contains numerous items which could be better utilised in other College collections including the Archive and the Gift Collection. This includes photographs which would become more accessible and better conserved in the College Archive and paintings historically added to the collection which were gifted to the College and would be better utilised in the College Gift Collection. This process would strengthen the standing of the art collection and ensure future commissioning and acquisitions are sustainable.

Legal and ethical framework for acquisition and disposal of items

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

Collecting policies of other Museums

33. With regards to acquisitions, rationalisation, and disposals, 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, to avoid unnecessary duplication and waste of resources.

34. Specific reference is made to the following Museum:

- The Hunterian Museum, Royal College of Surgeons of England, London.
- The Hunterian Museum and Gallery, University of Glasgow.
- The Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh
- The Lothian Health Service Archives
- Scottish Health Trust Archives
- The Anatomy Museum of Aberdeen University
- The Anatomy Museum of Edinburgh University
- The Anatomy Museum of Glasgow University
- The Museum Collections of Dundee University
- The National Gallery of Scotland
- The National Museums of Scotland.

35. The Museum will explore joint acquisition or shared stewardship agreements with these and other relevant bodies where this would enhance public benefit, clarify areas of specialism or ensure that collection items are held in the most appropriate institution.

Archival holdings

36. The Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh develops extensive Library and Archive collections aligned with the Museum collections. The RCSEd Library, Archive and Museum teams work closely together to ensure these respective collections are collaboratively and appropriately managed and developed in line with relevant industry standards. Where appropriate, items may be directed to the most suitable repository (Museum, Archive, Library or Gift Collection) to ensure coherent curation, access and long-term care.

Acquisition Policy and Protocols

37. All acquisitions are undertaken with reference to the SPECTRUM Procedures. The Museum will consider limitations on collecting imposed by such factors as staffing, storage and resources required for the long-term care of collections.
38. All acquisitions will be considered against the policies laid out within the Collection Development Policy.
39. All offers of acquisition are presented to the Curator and are discussed with the Director of Heritage and Estates in the first instance. If a decision cannot be reached or additional costs are involved, then the acquisition will be discussed at the Museum's Collections Committee, a committee of senior Heritage staff designed to inform rigorous decision-making on matters of the collection. The final decision lies with the Director of Heritage and Estates for acquisitions within approved budgetary limits.
40. Where an acquisition involves costs in excess of £10,000, the Curator and Director will seek approval from the RCSEd Heritage Committee to ensure strategic and appropriate investment in the collections is made.

Provenance Due Diligence

41. Acquisitions will only proceed where there is clear information to demonstrate that the item 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.)
42. 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 1 November 2002, the Museum will reject any items that have been illicitly traded. It 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.
43. Any exceptions to the above clauses will only be because the Museum is:
 - a. acting as an externally approved repository of last resort for material of local (UK) origin; or
 - b. acting with the permission of authorities with the requisite jurisdiction in the country of origin.
44. 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.
45. The Museum follows guidelines issued by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), which define due diligence as the necessary precaution that museums take to ensure that they acquire, borrow or lend only ethically acceptable material and reject items that may have questionable title, have been looted or illegally exported.

46. The Museum will not acquire or borrow any collection item unless it is satisfied that the owner or lender has good legal title and that they, or any agent acting for them, has full legal authority to enter into an agreement with the Museum.
47. The Director of Heritage and Estates has overall responsibility, delegated to the Curator, for ensuring that appropriate due diligence checks are carried out.

Human remains

48. The Museum has housed human remains since the 1700s, to support the study and understanding of the human body and the development of medical science.
49. Today, the human remains collections are governed by The Human Tissue (Scotland) Act, 2006. The collections include human tissue, organs, skeletal material, embryos, microscope slide preparations, teeth, skin, hair, as well as casts and moulds. These are from individuals who were once or are still living.
50. Most of the human remains were collected before the consent standards of today were established and the Museum recognises that not all participated with consent. At all times the Museum seeks to treat human remains with the utmost care, respect, and dignity, always mindful that they once belonged to living people.
51. As the Museum holds and intends to acquire human remains from any period, it will follow the guidelines in the *Guidance for the Care of Human Remains in Scottish Museums* issued by Museums Galleries Scotland in 2011.
52. Additionally, the Museum adheres to legal frameworks and other established guidelines for the care and management of human remains in museum settings which include:
- The Human Tissue (Scotland) Act 2006
 - UK Museums Association Code of Ethics
 - DCMS (2005) Guidance for the Care of Human Remains in Museums
 - ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums

Biological and geological material

53. So far as biological and geological material is concerned, the Museum will not acquire by any direct or indirect means any material 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.

Archaeological material

54. The Museum will not acquire archaeological material in any case where the governing body or responsible officer has any suspicion that the circumstances of its recovery involved a failure to follow the appropriate legal procedures.
55. In Scotland, under the laws of bona vacantia including Treasure Trove, the Crown has title to all ownerless objects including antiquities, although such material as human remains and environmental samples are not covered by the law of bona vacantia.

56. Scottish material of chance finds and excavation assemblages are offered to Museums through the treasure trove process and cannot therefore be legally acquired by means other than by allocation to Surgeons' Hall Museums by the Crown. However, where the Crown has chosen to forego its title to a portable antiquity or excavation assemblage, a Curator or other responsible person acting on behalf of Surgeons' Hall Museums, can establish that valid title to the item in question has been acquired by ensuring that a certificate of 'No Claim' has been issued on behalf of the Crown.

Exceptions

57. 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; or
- acting with the permission of authorities with the requisite jurisdiction in the country of origin.

58. 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.

Spoliation

59. 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.

Repatriation and Restitution

60. The RCSEd Heritage Committee, acting as the Museum's governing body and on the professional advice of Museum staff, reviews any proposed return of human remains or other accessioned collection items on a case-by-case basis. The Committee makes a formal recommendation to the RCSEd Trustee Board, which has final approval. All considerations are informed by legal requirements, ethical principles and relevant sector guidance.

61. Any decision to return human remains (unless governed solely by the *Guidance for the Care of Human Remains in Scottish Museums*), objects or specimens to a country or people of origin will be taken within the Museum's legal position and with full consideration of ethical implications and available guidance. The decision-making process will follow the principles for disposal set out in this policy, except where these are clearly inappropriate.

62. Any disposal or transfer of human remains from the Museum is carried out in accordance with all applicable legislation and best-practice standards, including the *Guidance for the Care of Human Remains in Scottish Museums* (Museums Galleries Scotland, 2011).

Collection Disposal Protocols

63. All disposals will be carried out with reference to the SPECTRUM Procedures.

64. 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.

65. 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.
66. The Curator, in consultation with the Director of Heritage & Estates, will make a formal recommendation for the disposal of any collection item. This recommendation will be submitted to the Heritage Committee for consideration and approval. The Heritage Committee is responsible for authorising all disposals from the collections, acting under delegated authority from the RCSEd Trustee Board.
67. Items may be considered for disposal if they meet one or more of the following criteria: they are duplicates; they contain hazardous materials posing an unmanageable risk; they are in such poor condition that they no longer hold value; or they fall outside the Museum's collecting remit. Disposal may occur by gift, sale, exchange, or, as a last resort, destruction.
68. When considering an item for disposal, the Curator and Director will first discuss the matter with the Collections Committee then provide the Heritage Committee with a full briefing outlining the reasons for the proposed disposal, the item's provenance, legal status, any associated conditions, and the recommended disposal route.
69. The Heritage Committee will confirm that the Museum is legally free to dispose of the item, including considering any title restrictions, conditions of gift, or statutory requirements.
70. Where an item was acquired with support from an external funding organisation, any conditions attached to the original grant will be observed. This may include repayment of the grant or a proportion of any sale proceeds where disposal by sale is proposed.
71. Any agreements made with donors at the point of acquisition will be fully considered, including how donor conditions and expectations should be appropriately managed in line with legal and ethical standards.
72. The Heritage Committee will make a final decision on disposal only after full consideration of the reasons for disposal, public benefit, the implications for the Museum's own collections, the potential impact on related collections elsewhere, and any relevant ethical issues. Expert advice will be sought where necessary, and the views of stakeholders such as donors, researchers, local or source communities, and others served by the Museum will be considered.
73. The decision to dispose of any collection item, whether by gift, exchange, sale, or destruction, will rest with the Heritage Committee, acting on the professional advice of curatorial staff and external experts. Decisions will not be taken by the Curator acting alone.

Disposal Methods

74. Upon agreement to dispose of an item, the protocols below will be followed. Disposal may occur through gift, sale, exchange or, as a last resort, destruction.
75. Priority will be given to keeping items within the public domain. They will first be offered, by gift or sale, to other Accredited Museums likely to be interested in acquisition.
76. If no Accredited Museum expresses interest, then the wider museum community will be advised of the intention to dispose of the material, normally through a notice on the Museums Association's *Find an Object* web listing service, an announcement in the *Museums Journal* or in other specialist publications and websites (if appropriate).
77. The announcement relating to gift or sale will indicate the number and nature of items 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 interest to be expressed. If no interest is received by the end of this period, the Museum may consider disposal to other interested individuals or organisations, prioritising those within the public domain.
78. Any funds generated from the disposal of items will be used exclusively for the benefit of the collections. This normally means the purchase of further acquisitions. In exceptional cases, improvements relating to the care of collections 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 Museums Galleries Scotland.
79. The proceeds of any 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.
80. 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 procedures on deaccession and disposal.

Disposals by Exchange

81. Disposal by exchange may be considered if it clearly benefits the Museum's collections. Exchanges with Accredited Museums will be prioritised, although exchanges with non-Accredited Museums or other organisations may be agreed upon if no Accredited Museums express interest.
82. The nature of disposal by exchange means that the Museum will not necessarily be in a position to exchange material with another Accredited Museum. The governing body will therefore ensure that issues relating to accountability and impartiality are carefully considered to avoid undue influence on its decision-making process.
83. In cases where the governing body wishes, for sound curatorial reasons, to exchange material directly with Accredited or non-Accredited Museums, with other organisations or

with individuals, the same principles and procedures that apply to other forms of disposal in this policy will be followed.

84. 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.
85. 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 Museums Association's *Find an Object* web listing service, or make an announcement in the *Museums Journal* or in other specialist publications and websites (if appropriate).
86. Both the notification and announcement must provide information on the number and nature of the items 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 body must consider the comments before a final decision on the exchange is made.

Disposal by Destruction

87. If it is not possible to dispose of an item through gifting, sale or exchange, it may be destroyed.
88. 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.
89. Destruction is also acceptable for items in extremely poor condition, with significant health and safety risks, or for those designated for destructive testing as per the Museum's research policy.
90. Specialist advice will be obtained as needed to determine the appropriate destruction method. Health and safety risk assessments will be conducted by trained staff or external contractors, as necessary.
91. The destruction of items will be witnessed by an appropriate Museum staff member. When this is not possible, such as in cases involving controlled substances, a police certificate should be obtained and filed in the object's history file.
92. Complete records of all disposal decisions and related items will be maintained. Appropriate arrangements will be made for the preservation or transfer of documentation, including photographic records when feasible, in accordance with Spectrum procedures on deaccession and disposal.

Lending Protocols

93. All collection lending activity will be carried out with reference to Spectrum procedures for loans in and loans out. Loans will be approved by the Curator and the Director of Heritage & Estates and, where appropriate, reported to the Heritage Committee. Due diligence, condition reporting, security, environmental standards and insurance will be assessed before any loan is agreed, to safeguard both the items and the borrowing institution.



Section Three

Collections Information Policy

Purpose of Policy

1. This policy directs Surgeons' Hall Museums (the Museum) approach to collections information and documentation, ensuring the highest standards of accuracy and information management for all collections in its care. It is enacted through the Museum's Documentation Plan and the Documentation Procedures Manual and guides all documentation related practices and processes.

Aims and Objectives

2. This policy aims to ensure the information relating to collections is accurate, secure, reliable and accessible. It seeks to achieve the following objectives:
 - Facilitate physical and intellectual access to the collections
 - Evolve traditional approaches to generating and sharing information about the collections, recognising internal biases, and actively collaborating with external parties to generate and share information to extend reach and engagement
 - Improve accountability for collections for which the Museum is responsible (including those in temporary care of the Museum)
 - Maintain at least minimum professional standards in documentation and strive to meet the highest standards
 - Maintain credibility with external stakeholders including audiences, funders, lenders and donors
 - Enable Museum teams to effectively manage and care for the collections
 - Strengthen the security of the collections.

Levels of Documentation

3. SPECTRUM 5.1 is the recognised documentation standard for UK cultural institutions and the Museum is committed to meeting these standards. The Museum will follow spectrum standards for the following primary procedures:
 - Object entry and exit
 - Acquisition and accessioning
 - Location and movement control
 - Inventory
 - Cataloguing
 - Loans in
 - Loans out
 - Documentation planning.

4. Further detailed information on the practice of each of the above can be found in the Museum's Documentation Procedures Manual.
5. The Museum recognises a backlog in the documentation of collections exists and that all collections are not documented to spectrum standards. The Museum is committed to tackling this backlog through actions set out in the Documentation Plan with defined projects, priorities and timescales.

Evolving Collections Information Practices

6. The Museum recognises and commits to evolving traditional approaches to creating and managing information about collections, seeking to change standard ways of working to proactively record multiple perspectives to meet the needs of a range of users. This includes:
 - a. Recognising that information about the collections is continuously developing and committing to cataloguing an ongoing process that builds on inventory information.
 - b. Seeking to engage multiple parties in generating, recording, and sharing information about the collections through targeted project-based work.
 - c. Recognising biases in information exist and actively working to identify and address these.
 - d. Ensuring transparency in changes made to collection information, with reliable systems in place to clearly record changes to collection information changes over time.
7. This commitment is supported through the Collections Access Policy, Documentation Plan as well as procedures and protocols in the Documentation Procedures Manual.

Collections Information Systems

8. The Museum is committed to maintaining and developing its collection information systems. The primary system is ADLIB which is currently being upgraded to Axiell Collections. The ongoing development of the collections information system will seek to ensure collections information is secure, accessible, compliant, updatable, and transparent.
9. Collection Information is also maintained in paper and photographic records, including card indexes, Nominal Files, Technical Files and record photographs.
10. Collection items acquired as digital (objects, images, audio, video) will be catalogued using comparable descriptive standards to physical objects, adding metadata for preservation purposes. The original digital 'master' will be preserved as a sustainable digital asset.
11. The Museum aims to digitise as much of its physical collection as resources permit, to improve digital accessibility. The Museum will seek to manage all generated digital assets in the collections information system with sufficient metadata to make them discoverable.

Accountability

12. The Museum works to ensure compliance with all legal requirements relating to the generation, management and sharing of information about collections, including the Data

Protection Act (1998), Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 (FOISA), Freedom of Information Act (2000), as well as the Scottish Human Tissue Act (2006).

13. Additionally, the Museum aims to ensure collections information is managed in line with sector best practice including spectrum standards and the Museum Association's Code of Ethics.

Access to Collection Information

14. The Museum is committed to ensuring access to collection information.

Information Requests

15. All requests for information will be considered with a presumption to approve unless legal restrictions apply.

Online sharing

16. The Museum shares collections information online via its website which includes a 'Search the Collections' web-database function. This database is supported by the Museum's Collections Information System, Axiell Collections.
17. The Museum also shares information about the collections via the online platform Bloomberg Connects. Collections information shared on Bloomberg Connects is designed for both general and specific audiences (for example, non-English speaking), with a range of media including video, images, and audio.

Lending Protocols

18. All collection lending activity will be carried out in line with spectrum standards.

19. The Museum undertakes lending and borrowing activities to:

- Enable greater access to collections, knowledge and expertise
- Extend the reach of the collections within and outside Scotland
- Maximise the benefits of partnership activity
- Maximise opportunities for mutual benefit for the borrower/lender
- Support shared research and scholarship.

20. The following criteria is used to consider requests for outgoing loans from the Museum:

- A minimum of three months' notice is provided
- If the item requested is required for the Museum's own purposes such as exhibition in the near future
- The physical condition of the loan item and its suitability for travel
- Resources available to facilitate the loan
- The suitability of the borrowing venue, including the borrower's ability to meet professional standards
- The status and relevance of the item to the exhibition theme and content
- That there is an appropriate level of public access.

21. The following criteria is used to consider requests for incoming loans to the Museum:

- A loan should be for the purpose of inclusion in a temporary exhibition or gallery display and must add demonstrably beneficial value that cannot be achieved with the Museum's own collection

- Additionally, items may be placed on loan to the Museum prior to acquisition
- Resources must be available to support the incoming loan
- Long-term loans will be reviewed on a regular basis.

Security of Collections Information

22. The Museum ensures the physical security of both the paper and digital collection information. Paper documentation including the Accession Register, entry forms, loan agreements and object history files are stored in a locked cabinet in a secured location.
23. Digital information is centralised and held in the Collections Information System, Axiell Collections, which is only editable by trained Heritage Department staff.
24. Axiell Collections is backed-up daily by the RCSEd's IT Department and stored on off-site secure servers that comply with all relevant rules for data safety. Manual back-ups are also made before any substantial changes are made to the database by Heritage staff.
25. Both hardcopy and digital records are regularly checked to ensure they remain accurate and accessible.
26. The Museum will continue to improve the level of detail of digital records in the collection to improve their accuracy and usability, whilst maintaining the current organisation and condition of hardcopy records.

Digital Preservation

27. To ensure the long-term preservation of digital collections information, the Museum collaborates closely with RCSEd's IT department to safeguard databases, files, and folders through robust digital preservation practices.



Section Four

Collections Access Policy

Purpose of Policy

1. This policy outlines the commitment by Surgeons' Hall Museums (the Museum) to proactively enabling and increasing access to the collections. As part of the Integrated Collections Management Framework, access is considered in accordance with the Collections Information and Conservation and Care Policies. This policy is supported by a dedicated Access Plan (2024-2028).

Statement of purpose

2. At Surgeons' Hall Museums we believe that everyone has a right to access and engage with the collections, resources, and services developed and shared. With a steadfast commitment to accessibility, we aim to inspire curiosity, foster learning, and spark meaningful conversations around the historical and societal impacts of surgery and healthcare.

Our commitment

3. We recognise there are many barriers to access at all levels and are committed to overcoming these. We consider access as something that is made possible when cultural, emotional, financial, intellectual, physical, sensory and social barriers are removed or reduced. We seek to achieve this through the following work:
 - **Physical:** enabling people with physical disabilities, and those in caring roles to access collection displays, exhibitions, online collection content, as well as programmes of learning and engagement activities.
 - **Sensory:** integrating a range of different sensory experiences throughout collection displays, exhibitions, online collection content, and learning and engagement activities.
 - **Intellectual:** using a range of activities and interpretation to engage people with different learning abilities.
 - **Cultural:** recognising cultural differences and seeking to represent varied cultural experiences, particularly through partnership and collaboration.
 - **Emotional:** creating an inclusive environment where audiences feel welcome and valued.
 - **Financial:** minimising financial barriers to access collections and learning activities.

Access Activities

4. We are committed to broadening access through the following activities:

Understanding Audiences

5. We see audiences as stakeholders. We will actively survey existing audiences and seeking regular audience feedback to understand gaps as well as strategies to improve access and engagement.

Learning and Engagement Programmes

6. We will maintain our learning programme, while developing and delivering a range of differentiated learning activities to target identified audience gaps including 'online' engagement to increase reach beyond our physical location.

Onsite Displays and Exhibitions

7. We will consider physical access issues to the museum displays and temporary exhibitions when designing and developing spaces.
8. We will regularly refresh long-term displays to ensure content is up-to-date and relevant.
9. We will create temporary exhibitions, with a focus on topics and stories relevant to targeted audience groups. Additionally, we will use these temporary exhibitions to share collections in different ways, including collaborating with external parties to bring external ideas and perspectives.
10. We will be open to lending and sharing collections with third parties through reactive and planned collection loans. All lending activity is undertaken in line with SPECTRUM procedures.

Lending and Borrowing

11. We will undertake outgoing collection loans to reach wider audiences within and beyond Scotland.
12. We will borrow collections to augment the Museum's displays and exhibitions, ensuring a broad range of audiences can connect to diverse and varied collection items.

Note: lending and borrowing activities are undertaken in line with the protocols set out in the Museum's Collections Information Policy and Documentation Procedures Manual.

Collections Information

13. By involving external stakeholders in project-based initiatives, we will enhance the generation and recording of collections information to ensure it is accurate, accessible, and relevant to a diverse audience.
14. We will undertake targeted projects to identify and correct information about the collections that may be inaccurate, harmful, or offensive, ensuring the collections remain inclusive and respectful.
15. Acknowledging the presence of biases that may restrict access, we will actively identify and implement strategies to address and mitigate these biases, fostering equitable access for all.

Online Sharing

16. Actively using targeted, appropriate digital platforms and social media channels to increase the reach of the collection beyond its physical location.
17. Research into barriers to accessing collections online due to poor data standards and models to identify ways to overcome these.

Accessible interpretation

18. We will adopt best practice sector guidance for interpretation including in exhibition texts, labels, and interactives.
19. We will consider the needs and different learning styles when planning activity programmes, exhibitions and collection engagement.

Collaboration

20. We will partner and collaborate with specialist groups, for example, University 'Widening Participation' programmes and access focused charities to extend the capacity and reach of our workforce.
21. We will ensure contractors, consultants and outside agencies adopt and observe these access policies.

Research

22. We will enable access to the collections for all levels of research both externally and internally. In all areas of research, we aim to ensure findings are recorded and shared to advance the information held on collections which will benefit future projects, as well as the care and interpretation of individual collection items.

Sustainability

23. We will develop sustainable access through strategic planning and management of resources, as well as pragmatic risk mitigation for physical collections.

Legal Adherence

24. We will adhere to all national and international statutes of law relating to access, including the Equality Act 2010, Freedom of Information Act 2000, Data Protection Act 1998 and the Disability Discrimination Act 2005.

Limitations

25. All requests for access will be balanced against the standards laid out in the Collections Information and Conservation and Care Policies. In accordance with these policies the Museum may refuse access which would put in jeopardy the long-term preservation of the collections or access sensitive or protected information.
26. Access is constrained by available resources and financial limitations.
27. Access to human remains in the collection will only be allowed in compliance with the recommendations of Museum Galleries Scotland's, Guidelines for the Care of Human Remains in Scottish Museum Collections.



Section Five

Collections Care Policy

Purpose of Policy

1. This Policy establishes the principles informing the care and conservation of the collections at Surgeons' Hall Museums (The Museum). Detailed care and conservation plans are outlined in the Museums' Care and Conservation Plan.
2. The Museum aims to achieve an appropriate balance between the use of, access to and preservation of collections. The principles that govern the Museum's approach to collections care and conservation are informed by:
 - Risk management
 - Compliance with relevant legislation
 - Following appropriate sector standards and best practice
 - Effective training and communication of collections care and conservation issues to employees and relevant stakeholders
 - Professional standards in documentation and collections information.

Collections Care Principles

3. The Museum recognises preventive conservation measures are central to care of collection items over their lifespan and will prioritise these measures as resources permit.
4. The following activities are restricted to authorised staff, volunteers, and third parties who have appropriate training and follow agreed guidelines set out in the Museum's Collection Manual: collection handling, moving, cleaning, storing, transporting, acquisition, display, lending, and disposing.
5. Any item known or suspected to contain a hazardous material will be assessed and managed in line with legal regulations and best practice.
6. A regular housekeeping schedule is implemented across all collection areas including stores and displays. This schedule is designed to decrease the risks of pest and environmental damage to collections through regular deep cleans, ad hoc collection checks, as well as checks of facilities and building fabrics in collection areas. A strict policy of no food or drink in collection areas is enforced at all times including internal and external events.
7. An established Integrated Pest Management Plan is in place, with a programme for monitoring all collection areas including stores and displays for possible pest infestation with systems to adequately deal with any potential outbreaks.
8. Recording and monitoring, relative humidity, temperature and light levels across collection areas including stores and displays is established. Using a Meaco, a Raspberry Pi 3B+

data receiver, data from across collection areas is regularly inspected, and any problems investigated.

9. Display materials / methods used for, or in proximity to, collections items will consider any potential negative impact on the condition of the collection item to ensure they are appropriate for use.
10. The Museum is committed to reducing the environmental impact and overall costs of caring for the collections, where possible and appropriate.

Remedial Conservation Principles

11. Remedial conservation is often needed when preventive measures have failed, or an object has become damaged through accident. Remedial conservation can be resource intensive and can often damage the authenticity of the object. Therefore, remedial conservation will be restricted to the following activities:
 - Objects required for display or loan
 - Risk to the longevity of the object
 - Importance or uniqueness within the collection or as part of the recognition status of the collections
 - Collection budget allowances.
12. If remedial conservation is required, the Museum will ensure to select an external registered and qualified conservator. All treatment proposed will be pre-approved by the collections team. All conservation treatment will be recorded as laid out in the Collection Information Policy.
13. The Human Remains Collections are subject to an in-house Human Remains Conservator who will undertake any preventive or remedial work on this area of the collections in agreement with the collections team and Director of Heritage and Estates.

Emergency and Disaster preparedness

14. The Museum will adequately plan for any emergency or disaster which could affect the safety of the collections. In order to prevent disaster, the Museum meets established Fire and Security guidelines and ensure consistent maintenance.
15. The Museum has in place a Collections Incident Response Plan. Heritage Department staff are inducted and trained to use this plan. It is also shared with relevant external department teams to use in case of an emergency.
16. The Collections Incident Plan includes high priority objects and documents which have been physically arranged for access by first responders. Further information and procedures can be found in the Collections Incident Response Plan.

Recording

17. Any significant activity involving collections will be recorded in accordance with the Collection Information Policy. A condition check and report will be made prior to any significant move, installation or conservation work. This report will then be assessed at

the end of the activity and a further report made if any significant changes are recorded. Staff, visitors and volunteers will be encouraged to notify collections staff of any damage or changes to collections on display and report damage immediately via the Collections Incident Log.

People

18. The Heritage Department team, under the direction of the Director of Heritage and Estates, is responsible for implementing and enforcing the Collection Care and Conservation Policy. They are also responsible for the training of any staff member or volunteer who will in any way interact with the collections.
19. To meet the objectives of this policy and ensure continuous improvement, the Heritage Department team will attend training courses to both refresh and enhance collections care and conservation skills.

Buildings

20. The Museum recognises that the maintenance of its buildings is fundamental to the preservation of both the building and collection and endeavours to keep the buildings in a suitable condition.
21. The Director of Heritage and Estates leads the management and development of the buildings and grounds of the College including the A-Listed Playfair Building and museum spaces.
22. Full procedures for reporting building maintenance and/or remedial work are laid out in the Integrated Housekeeping and Pest Management Plan and the Collections Incident Response Plan.

Working Items

23. The Museum has a dedicated procedure for the management of historic working items which consist of the ceremonial silverware collections.