

# Royal College of General Practitioners Collections Enquiry and Access Policy

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### **1. Policy Aim**

The heritage collections held at the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) are comprised of objects and artefacts, unpublished archival material and historical published books, relating to the specialty of general practice.

The Archivist, as part of the Membership Communities and Engagement team, is responsible for the care of this heritage collection, which includes providing access to the collection to recognised professional standards. The aim of this policy is to ensure consistency in the level of access to and care for the heritage collection provided by the College.

User guidelines and regulations for visitors and researchers are available and should be used by staff in combination with this policy.

### **2. Enquiry Policy**

2.1 Unless otherwise agreed at the time an enquiry is made, 80% of all enquiries by phone, visit or email should receive a reply within 5 working days from receipt by the Archivist, which may be a partial response. More complex enquiries will require a longer response time.

2.2 Letters (where no other method of communication provided) – a reply should be sent to 90% within 1 week.

2.3 Email to/from [heritage@rcgp.org.uk](mailto:heritage@rcgp.org.uk) is the preferred method of communication as this can be accessed by the wider team.

### 3. Access policy

- 3.1 The Royal College of General Practitioners recognises that public access to archives is essential for an informed society. Although there is no legal obligation to open the archives of the RCGP to external users, the College recognises that its institutional records and personal papers, as well as other aspects of the heritage collections, have significant value for understanding the impact of general practice on social, community and personal history.
- 3.2 The RCGP recognises that allowing public access to its institutional records helps maintain institutional transparency and improve public understanding of its unique history and contributions to the healthcare profession. Most College records older than twenty years are available for consultation by external researchers. For records under 20 years old an application will have to be made to senior members of College staff via the Archivist to demonstrate the necessity for access. All College records are available for consultation by College Officers, Fellows and Members, with the exception of records closed due to data protection issues.
- 3.3 Any other restrictions on collections will be shown in the CALM catalogue and should be checked before any access is granted. Where material is not yet catalogued or transcribed into the CALM database these collections should be assessed by the Archivist before access is granted. These restrictions will take into consideration Data Protection issues and conditions imposed by external donors of special collections, and will follow national guidance in terms of closed periods. All restrictions will be subject to regular reviews.
- 3.4 Heritage collections are available on equal terms of access and recognition is made of the different categories of users and their different requirements.
- 3.5 Material from the heritage collections may be subject to temporary closure for conservation and cataloguing work, and the Archivist will provide information regarding such closures. Items too fragile for handling may also be withheld.

#### **4. Physical access to the heritage collection**

- 4.1 Access is by appointment only. Appointments are necessary for all visitors having access to material from the heritage collection via the Archivist ([heritage@rcgp.org.uk](mailto:heritage@rcgp.org.uk)).
  - 4.1.1 Shortage of space to access collections and a shortage of staff to provide supervision make this an essential proviso.
- 4.2 Proof of identity is required for external readers before material is consulted.
- 4.3 All collections must be ordered in advance of a visit via the Archivist ([heritage@rcgp.org](mailto:heritage@rcgp.org)).
  - 4.3.1 The majority of the Archive collection is stored offsite and therefore needs to be ordered in advance of a visit.
- 4.4 All heritage items retrieved for a visitor must be recorded using the location tracker document.
- 4.5 No visitor who has access to heritage material is to be left unsupervised at any time
  - 4.5.1 Professional archive and museum standards require that invigilation of visitors is required at all times. Invigilation is understood to be a physical presence in the room with clear views of all visitors.
- 4.6 All users of the Heritage Collections will be expected to sign a User Undertaking which outlines their responsibility under the Data Protection Act and Copyright Act

#### **5. Security of the heritage collection**

- 5.1 No large bags are to be taken into the room by visitors consulting heritage material
- 5.2 Staff may choose to offer to store large bags and cases in the office areas, at their discretion.
- 5.3 No items from the heritage collection may be removed from the meeting room/library by visitors at any time
- 5.4 All items should be returned to a member of staff by the visitor prior to leaving and staff should physically check items being returned by visitors.

## 6. Handling of heritage materials

- 6.1** All material must be consulted in the room booked for the visit and not removed elsewhere. Appropriate weights and book rests should be provided for visitors consulting large volumes. These are available in the Archive stationary drawer. No heavy weights should be used on documents or volumes to avoid damage.
- 6.2** Pencils only may be used for making notes, no pens. This is to avoid irreparable damage being caused to books and documents.
- 6.3** No food or drink is to be consumed by users whilst consulting the heritage material.
- 6.4** Photographs and plans must be retained in their protective plastic sleeves while being examined
- 6.5** Gloves are only necessary when handling certain museum objects and will be provided when necessary.

## 7. Copying of the heritage collection

- 7.1** Photocopying of heritage material is not permissible, either by staff or users, in order to protect sensitive and fragile material. It may be possible to photocopy more robust modern material at the discretion of the Archivist.
- 7.2** Users may use their own cameras and devices in order to make digital copies for research purposes only. A flash should not be used. Details of material photographed must be noted on the Heritage Digital Copying form. Staff reserve the right to disallow any photography which may incur risk to the material being copied.

This policy should be reviewed every five years or where significant changes to the Heritage Service occur.

<b>VERSION CONTROL</b>			
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