

Library working collection policy and acquisitions procedures 2024

Brief acquisitions guidelines

1. Working collection titles

- 1.1. Working collection items are museum assets which are the property of RMG but not accessioned into the permanent collection. They consist of printed bibliographic items (almost always books or pamphlets) which are not unique. Printed ephemera, manuscripts and works of art (even if printed) cannot be considered for the working collection. If Library staff wish to redesignate a working collection item as permanent collection, approval must be obtained from the Collections Development Committee (CDC) for the Museum to assume title. It is not envisaged that this procedure would be used very often, nor that it would ever be used shortly after acquiring an item for the working collection.
- 1.2. Loans are not accepted into the working collection. External requests for loans out from the working collection are managed by the Registration Team. The Library does not participate in interlibrary lending.
- 1.3. These guidelines have been drafted utilizing a variety of acquisitions policies and our current acquisition practices. The aim is to provide a clear policy statement identifying acquisition principles, without claiming to be the definitive coverage of everything eligible for acquisition.
- 1.4. The RMG Collection Development Policy guides us as to the Museum's, including the Library and Archive's, main aims, which are to enrich people's understanding of the sea, the exploration of space, and Britain's role in world history. Primarily the collections reflect British maritime development and in many cases they are **representative** rather than comprehensive. The Library does not attempt to build an expertise in areas that are more suitably covered by other institutions, e.g. events or people linked to the history of the Thames are subjects of the Museum of London, its outstation the Museum of London Docklands, and the Guildhall Library.

2. Sources

- 2.1. Currently, sources used for information on new acquisitions include book notices and reviews in magazines, publishers' flyers, and booksellers' and publishers' catalogues. Some publishers' websites are also checked. Amazon is also a good source for checking future releases.

3. Permanent collection titles (pre-1850 publications; ephemera)

- 3.1. Follow guidance and process of RMG's Collection Development Policy.

- 3.2. Only RMG staff (rather than an offeror) can initiate the process for a post-1850 item to be considered for the permanent collection. If an offeror expresses a wish that a post-1850 item valued at under £1,000 be considered for the permanent collection, and RMG staff cannot see any justification for doing so, they will inform the offeror that the item offered cannot be considered for the permanent collection since it does not meet the necessary criteria.

4. Legal and ethical background

- 4.1. The National Maritime Museum Act 1934 and further Acts governing the Acquisition and Disposal of items from RMG's collection do not apply to working collection items.
- 4.2. Beyond this point, the acquisition, disposal and stewardship of working collection items must still adhere to the law and to the ethical guidelines for museums. A non-exclusive list includes:
- RMG's Due Diligence Policy
 - CITES
 - The Museums Association Code of Ethics
- 4.3. Human remains may not be acquired as working collection items. Any items containing human remains (e.g. a book bound in human skin) are managed in accordance with permanent collection policy. Any proposed acquisition of items containing human remains would therefore be progressed with advice being sought from CDC. Items containing human remains must be stored at PPMCC with access to them being tightly controlled.
- 4.4. Working collection items will by definition resemble permanent collection items and may or may not be considered Cultural Property. Concern for the reputation of RMG should therefore be considered at all times in the management of working collection items.
- 4.5. If we receive a book for the working collection from a seller or donor which, upon delivery, is found to contain marks of previous ownership which indicate that it was formerly in the collection of another extant institutional library (e.g. university, research library, public library service, etc.) but it has no withdrawn or cancelled mark, we will, as a matter of course, carry out due diligence by attempting to contact the library concerned in order to check if the item has been withdrawn. If we proceed to add the item to the working collection, we will retain this correspondence whether or not we receive a reply.

5. Acquisition and recording of working collection items

- 5.1. Working collection items are recorded and administered by the Library team. The value limit of any one working collection item is £1,000 and the

annual acquisitions budget for working collection monographs is not more than £10,000. The Library only pays for items which are already in existence. Whilst the Library may preorder items planned for publication, the Library would not pay for such items before publication has actually occurred.

- 5.2. Working collection items will be recorded in the Library Management System (currently SirsiDynix *Symphony*) with an ID Number beginning 'PB...' and will appear to the public via the Museum's online catalogue. Library items (rare books, working collection and periodicals) have their own 'Library' tab on Collections Online. If a MIMSY XG record is required for Museum processes (e.g., photography) then this will be in addition to the *Symphony* record. The Legal Status on the MIMSY XG record will be PROPERTY OF THE NMM.
- 5.3. The Registration Department are not involved in the appraisal or acquisition of working collection items except to forward such offers to the Library or where the working collection item(s) is/are part of a wider acquisition under consideration where that wider acquisition also includes potential permanent collection items. In such cases, the Library and Registration teams will agree between them whether Registration will handle all communication with the potential donor or seller or only the communication relating to the potential permanent collection items. In the latter case, the Library will handle communication relating to the potential working collection items. The following RMG staff are authorized to accept working collection items:
- Librarian (Acquisitions and Cataloguing)
 - Librarian (Systems and Serials)
 - Senior Manager: Archive and Library
 - Chief Executive Officer, Royal Museums Greenwich
- 5.4. Any RMG staff may suggest or recommend items for acceptance into the working collection but the final authority to accept these items rests with the Librarian (Acquisitions and Cataloguing), the Librarian (Systems and Serials), and the Senior Manager: Archive and Library.

6. Location, movement control and audit

- 6.1. Working collection items may be moved between locations without the use of an Electronic Movement Form (and thereby the use of the RMG Art and Object Handling team). Working collection items may be moved by RMG staff, including the use of the internal post. Working collection items will have a 'home location' in *Symphony* which means that the location does not need to be updated if items are being moved temporarily for learning sessions, cataloguing enhancement, consultation in the Reading Room, etc. Significant location changes, i.e. a change of storage location will be recorded in *Symphony*. Moves from offsite to onsite will be

recorded in the Library's ordering system Aeon, as will retrievals and reshelving of items requested for consultation in the Library's Reading Room, unless they are reference-only copies stored in the Reading Room. Loans to RMG staff are recorded in *Symphony*.

7. Conservation, condition and health and safety

- 7.1. Working collection items are eligible for Conservation or Condition Assessment by RMG's Conservation and Preservation Team or external binder. However, the cost of conserving or rebinding working collection items should be weighed against the cost of purchasing new copies.
- 7.2. The same level of diligence as for permanent collection items must be applied to working collection items when they are assessed for any threat they pose to other collection items. A non-exclusive list would include insect pests, mould and deteriorating materials.
- 7.3. Working collection items should also comply with the Museum's guidance on the management of Hazards in the Collections and be managed in line with all relevant legislation concerning substances which are hazardous to health.

8. Disposal of working collection items

- 8.1. Disposal of working collection items is carried out in accordance with the Working Collection Disposals Procedure and recorded in the Disposals Spreadsheet (REG13/000461-00004).
- 8.2. Working collection items may be disposed of by internal transfer to another Museum department, external transfer to another organization, being sold to book dealers or donated to charities, secure destruction. In all cases, the Library's marks of ownership should be cancelled, either by use of the designated 'WITHDRAWN' ink stamp (for books) or striking through the receipt date stamp (for single issues of periodicals). They are either shadowed on or deleted from *Symphony* (this decision rests with the Librarians).
- 8.3. Working collection items which are not sighted are marked as such on *Symphony* and added to the Search in Progress spreadsheet. If the items remain not sighted after three checks, a decision is made by one of the authorized staff as to whether to replace the item or designate it as lost. The authorized staff are the Librarian (Acquisitions and Cataloguing), the Librarian (Systems and Serials), and the Senior Manager: Archive and Library. If the decision is made to designate the items as lost, then the item's disposal is recorded on the Disposals Spreadsheet. The item is then either shadowed on or deleted from *Symphony* (with the decision resting with the Librarians). No further action will be undertaken to locate a lost working collection item. However, in some cases there may be a

factor which is of concern and requires immediate action. A non-exclusive list of concerns which might require immediate action includes:

- the item contains a hazard
- there is any suggestion that the item could have been stolen
- the item is scarce, of high value or has a significant provenance

8.4. If the item contains a hazard, this will be reported to Conservation. If a theft is suspected this will be immediately reported to the Head of Security and investigated in line with the Security Policy and procedures. If the item is scarce, of high value or has a significant provenance, this will be reported to relevant staff via the Senior Manager: Archive and Library.

9. Subject Coverage

9.1. The Library aims to cover the four main themes of the sea, ships, time and the stars. Primarily the collections reflect Britain's maritime development, but this inevitably leads to a global context and acquisitions acknowledge this influence. Further information can be obtained from RMG's Collection Development Policy.

9.2. Below is a list of subjects in which we are actively collecting. Please note that the order does not imply priority.

- Historic Maritime Greenwich
- Exploration, Time and Space
 - Astronomy – from ancient times to the present day
 - Horology – specifically the maritime context and as centre of global time
 - Navigation – including books on hydrographic and cartographic material, sextants and other tools on navigation
 - Exploration – the search for sea routes, scientific exploration and naval surveying, and Polar exploration
 - Early British Colonization
- The Sea – British Conflict and Trade
 - Sea conflict and trade to 1815
 - Sea conflict and trade 1815 – 1914
 - Sea conflict and trade 1914 – 2000 and beyond
- The worldwide role of British seafaring activity and the development of shipping, including Royal and Merchant Navies, communications and culture

- The Sea as Inspiration
 - Art and Visual Media – maritime art
- The Sea as a Resource
 - Sport and Recreation – leisure and sporting activities associated with the sea, including seaside, cruising and yachting from 17th century
- Museology, librarianship and other works which help RMG staff to curate or manage objects and collections in the Museum's care if, in the Library's view, these publications are of sufficient longer-term value to be worth buying rather than borrowing via interlibrary loan

9.3. Items and subject areas not currently being acquired (these are subject to review against the Research Strategy and in consultation with the Head of Curatorship and Research):

- All areas of maritime issues and observatory interests will be represented, but the Library will not attempt to build an expertise in areas that are more suitably covered by other institutions (example: books on marine biology)
- Items relating to nautical/maritime archaeology or texts devoted solely to ancient sea history – excluding titles on significant vessels such as *Mary Rose* or *Titanic*
- Duplicate books; unless a new edition is significantly different or title is/may become a seminal text in the subject area
- Ethnography
- Fishing industry with the exception of material covering fishing communities or whaling fleets
- Modern ship design or naval architecture
- Modern maritime law and economics
- Books in foreign languages, unless they are a significant contribution to the subject
- Literature and poetry, although donations of fictional works or poetry with a direct link to the Greenwich site of the Royal Observatory, or which deal with the public perception of astronomy, can be considered. Our collection of such works does not aim to be comprehensive, and, as with the rest of the Library's collection, post-1850 works of this type form part of the Library's working collection rather than the Museum's permanent collection

9.4. Some points to consider:

- Hard-covered books are generally preferred over paperback editions
- We try to refrain from purchasing poor quality re-prints of older books

- We do not acquire e-books. This is because they are on average more expensive than the print versions and because they cannot be acquired in perpetuity
- We are not normally interested in obtaining duplicates of books we already hold in our collection. However, duplicates may be purchased if we feel it is a seminal text and in demand
- When searching the Library catalogue to determine whether an item is held by the Library, never search the cataloguing using the ISBN or the entirety of the title
- We are careful not to accept non-academic genealogy titles unless very significant
- Whilst the Library is not proactively collecting in these subject areas, we will consider and respond to requests from RMG staff to acquire, as an exception, individual titles dealing with these subjects or with other subjects outside of the subject coverage of the Working Collection Development Policy, where a justification can be made for their acquisition (e.g. research or display purpose). This may include a specific illustration integral to the work (which cannot be obtained in any other way) or a significant provenance. In some cases, it may be more appropriate to consider such items for the permanent collection, in which case the permanent collection acquisition procedure should be followed. Where works are acquired as working collection exceptions, a folder is created in Content Manager to document the reasons for their acquisition. In these working collection exceptions, the final authority to acquire these items rests with the Librarian (Acquisitions and Cataloguing), the Librarian (Systems and Serials), and the Senior Manager: Archive and Library, though Curators may decide to acquire published items for their own collections

9.5. Unsolicited donations received by the Library are appraised against the relevant acquisitions policy (the present one for working collection titles, or the Museum-wide Collections Development Policy for potential permanent collection items). Potential working collection items which we wish to decline are returned directly to the sender. Where this is not possible (for example, in the case of anonymously donated material) the items are offered out to Museum departments, given to charity or disposed of securely. Potential permanent collection items are passed to Registration for return to the offeror or, where this is not possible, retention and later disposal in accordance with the Museum's policy.

10. Unpublished items

10.1. Unpublished items (e.g., theses or dissertations) dealing with the subjects we collect can be acquired for the working collection of the Library and are subject to the same collection criteria as above. Research fellows of RMG are encouraged to donate a copy of their theses to the Caird Library. We would expect fellows' theses to be donated already

printed out and bound, and would prefer all theses or dissertations donated to us to be printed out and bound in a durable hardback binding. In addition to meeting the usual subject requirements which apply to published items, unpublished items must also meet the following additional criteria:

- It is possible to ascertain to a reasonable degree that the standard of scholarship is satisfactory
- We must be able to make the item freely available to readers and to permit readers to quote from and copy from the items for non-commercial purposes, subject to the usual practices of good scholarship (e.g., acknowledging and citing the source). The donor or supplier must be legally able to grant this right to RMG or to be able to provide proof that this has been granted by the person with this right, or to put us in contact with this person (who must then grant us this right)
- If the item is a transcript of a manuscript item, the original manuscript must be unavailable to access in other publicly-accessible repositories
- We are free to digitise, rebind, re-house or conserve the item as we see fit. Any binding or other container housing or storing the item upon its donation to or acquisition by RMG is ours to retain or dispose of as we see fit without the need to revert to the donor or supplier. We are, however, under no obligation to bind the material
- Documents on CD (e.g. Word file or PDF) can be acquired subject to the same criteria as unpublished documents in hard copy. However, we must be permitted to store the files on other drives or media and in other file types, and to print off copies. This is to aid the accessibility of these items both in the short term and to guard against their becoming inaccessible in the future should the files become obsolete. It is also to ensure the integrity of the documents (e.g., by converting them to non-editable file types or physical forms)