



## RHSV Collection Policy

### 1 RHSV Collection Policy

The Royal Historical Society of Victoria (RHSV) holds an extensive collection of books, serials, pamphlets, artworks and images built up since 1909 and reflecting the RHSV's focus on Victorian history. The RHSV is dedicated to collecting, preserving, exhibiting, and interpreting Victoria's history and heritage.

### 2 Policy purposes

1. To inform RHSV members, employees, donors and volunteers about the management of the RHSV collections.
2. To guide the Council, Collections Committee and Collections Manager in the management of the collections.

### 3 Alignment

This Policy is aligned with:

- a) The Purposes of the Society, defined in clause 1.2 of the RHSV Constitution adopted in May 2019, at <https://www.historyvictoria.org.au/about/constitution-by-laws/>;
- b) The RHSV Diversity Statement, at [https://www.historyvictoria.org.au/?s=diversity+statement](https://www.historyvictoria.org.au/?s=diversity+statement;);
- c) *Victoria's Framework of Historical Themes* (Melbourne: Heritage Council of Victoria, 2010), at <https://www.heritage.vic.gov.au/research-and-publications/framework-of-historical-themes>;
- d) *International Council of Museums Code of Ethics for Museums*, at <https://icom.museum/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/ICOM-code-En-web.pdf>. Alignment with the *Code* is a requirement of the RHSV's accreditation under the Museum Accreditation Program of Museums Australia (Vic).
- e) *National Standards for Australian Museums and Galleries* (current version is 1.5 2016, at [www.mavic.asn.au/assets/National\\_Standards\\_1\\_5.pdf](http://www.mavic.asn.au/assets/National_Standards_1_5.pdf)). These standards underpin the Museum Accreditation Program of Museums Australia (Vic.)
- f) The *Income Tax Assessment Act 1997* in relation to the Society's obligations as a Deductible Gift Recipient and as an organisation entitled to receive donations of items under the Cultural Gifts Program.

## 4 WHAT THE SOCIETY COLLECTS

### 4.1 HISTORIC PERIOD

The RHSV collects research material relating to Victoria from European settlement to the present day, with a particular emphasis on Melbourne.

### 4.2 KEY THEMES

The collection strengths align with *Victoria's Framework of Historical Themes*

01 Shaping Victoria's environment	06 Building towns, cities and the garden state
02 Peopling Victoria's places and landscapes	07 Governing Victorians
03 Connecting Victorians by transport and communications	08 Building community life
04 Transforming and managing the land	09 Shaping cultural and creative life
05 Building Victoria's industries and workforce	

### 4.3 ITEMS TO BE COLLECTED

Subject to the RHSV's strategic directions and practical capacities (including the matters defined in clause 4.4 below), items will be collected to develop the RHSV collection.

Items can be in physical or digital format. Physical items may be two-dimensional or three-dimensional.

### 4.4 ITEMS THAT ARE NOT COLLECTED

Items that are not related to Victorian history will not normally be collected.

Hazardous materials will not normally be collected.

Large items are not accepted unless there is a strategic reason to acquire them.

If the Collections Committee rejects an item offered to the Society, it may suggest a more appropriate repository to the owner.

### 4.5 SUB-COLLECTIONS

The RHSV collection has several sub-collections. Its divisions are:

- A. Library materials—i.e. published items (books and serials/journals) that are not classified as belonging to one or more of the sub-collections listed in below. These may be in digital or physical format.

- B. All other materials. These are retained with a presumption of permanence, and are currently classified as follows:
- i. Archives
  - ii. Databases
  - iii. Directories
  - iv. Ephemera (housed in the Vertical Files)
  - v. Historical Society publications, including newsletters and other records
  - vi. Images
  - vii. Manuscripts
  - viii. Maps
  - ix. Newspapers
  - x. Objects
  - xi. Pamphlets (housed in the Vertical Files)
  - xii. Rare Books
  - xiii. Scrapbooks

## 5 ACQUISITION

Acquisitions can be made through purchase or by gift. A gift may be in the form of a donation, bequest, exchange or transfer.

Potential acquisitions are assessed against the following criteria:

- The item must have relevance to the purposes of the RHSV, as set out in the Constitution, and to this Policy as a whole:
  - a) The item should have relevant historical significance;
  - b) The item should have clearly documented provenance where possible;
  - c) The item should be a worthy example of its type;
  - d) The item should have the potential to be used in the research, exhibition, communication and interpretation activities of the Society;
  - e) The condition of the item should be such that the Society can adequately conserve and care for it;
  - f) Legal title to the item should be available to the Society (i.e. permanent loans shall not be accepted);
  - g) The item should be available to the RHSV without encumbrances or conditions unless the requested conditions are determined by the Collections Committee to be reasonable and fair.
- When acquiring an item the RHSV must give due consideration to the resources required to house and maintain this work for posterity. The RHSV will only accept an item if adequate and appropriate storage is available.
- When acquiring items for the library sub-collection preference must be given to items that are directly relevant to the library's historic and current collection strengths.

Relevant works that are not readily available elsewhere in Victoria in either physical or digital form will be prioritised.

The RHSV documents all acquisitions to facilitate identification, provenance and research.

## 6 CONTRACTUAL TERMS FOR GIFTS

- a) The Collections Committee is authorised to decide on behalf of the RHSV whether to accept an offered item.
- b) The Collections Committee is guided by this Policy and bases its decision on the criteria set out in clause 5.
- c) Gifts should be unconditional unless the requested conditions are deemed by the Collections Committee to be reasonable and fair.
- d) No commitment can be made by the RHSV to permanently display any item in the collection.
- e) The RHSV will include an appropriate credit line to acknowledge the gift, as and if requested, whenever the item is displayed or otherwise published.
- f) The RHSV will not display material if, in the opinion of the Collections Manager or other relevant professional, the condition of that material would be seriously impaired by such display.
- g) Following the Collections Committee's decision to accept an item, a Deed of Gift form must be co-signed by the donor and a responsible member of the RHSV (e.g. the Collections Manager or Executive Officer) in order to ensure the transfer of legal ownership of the item to the RHSV.
- h) If an offered gift is not accepted, the person offering it will be informed in writing of this decision and the reasons for it.

## 7 REMOVAL OF ITEMS FROM THE COLLECTION

### 7.1 STRATEGIC PURPOSE

The RHSV recognises that the well-considered and formal removal of an accessioned item from its permanent collection is a strategy for strengthening the collection so that the collection supports the purposes of the RHSV.

Removal can be undertaken either via the process of *deselection* in the case of library materials or via the process of *deaccessioning* for non-library materials

### 7.2 CRITERIA FOR REMOVAL

Deselection and deaccession decisions should be guided by the following criteria

- a) The item is a duplicate of one that is:
  - already owned by the RHSV and held in the collection; and
  - in better condition and/or holds greater significance.

- b) This Policy has been revised since the item was acquired and the item has been found to be non-compliant with the current Policy.
- c) The item can no longer be suitably maintained/used/stored by the RHSV.
- d) The RHSV has discovered that the item was originally acquired unethically or illegally.
- e) The item is subject to contractual donor restrictions that the RHSV can no longer meet.
- f) An Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander or other community/cultural group has laid claim to the item, and the RHSV is willing to acknowledge the merits of their claim for repatriation.
- g) A rightful owner has laid claim to the item, and the RHSV is willing to acknowledge the merits of the claim for restitution.
- h) The item has been damaged or has deteriorated, and the costs of conservation outweigh the value to the collection.
- i) The item is inherently hazardous, or contains hazardous materials.
- j) The item has been lost or stolen, and the RHSV (and its insurers) has determined that recovery is highly unlikely.
- k) The item is in the library sub-collection, is of marginal relevance to the RHSV and is readily available elsewhere in Victoria in physical or digital form.

### 7.3 PROCESS FOR REMOVAL

Recommendations for deselection or deaccession should be prepared by the Collections Manager (or another responsible member of the Society's staff or volunteers) for consideration by the Collections Committee.

Recommendations for deaccession (non-library materials) must be approved by Council on the recommendation of the Collections Committee.

Each deselection or deaccession recommendation should include the proposed method(s) of disposal; these should relate to the guidance provided by clause 7.5.

The Collections Committee is authorised on behalf of the RHSV to approve deselections from the library sub-collection.

In some cases an internal transfer to another of the library's sub-collections is appropriate, and the Collections Manager is authorised to do this and make the relevant changes to the catalogue without reference to the Collections Committee.

The Collections Manager is also authorised to dispose of duplicate items from the library sub-collection if they meet the above criteria and without consultation with the Collections Committee, providing that the title is retained in the catalogue and continues to be represented in the collection.

## 7.4 COOLING-OFF PERIOD

No cooling-off period applies to the deselection of items from the library sub-collection.

The RHSV may require a cooling-off period of 12 months between a decision to deaccession, and any implementation of that decision.

The cooling-off period is, however, inappropriate when the RHSV must respond without unwarranted delay—for example, when a hazardous item needs to be removed quickly because of the danger it presents to people (visitors and staff) and/or to the environment.

The Collections Committee, when making a deaccessioning recommendation to Council, will also recommend whether or not a cooling-off period should apply, and what the duration of such a cooling-off period should be.

## 7.5 ETHICAL DISPOSAL FROM THE COLLECTION

The RHSV acknowledges that, in accordance with the Museums Association's *Disposal Toolkit: Guidelines for Museums* (revised edition, 2014), p. 7 (available via [www.museumsassociation.org/collections/disposal-toolkit](http://www.museumsassociation.org/collections/disposal-toolkit)), ethical disposal has the following characteristics:

- It is determined within the framework of this Policy and contributes strategically to the development of the collection;
- It is done on the advice of a range of people (not an individual);
- It is done with the intention that, wherever possible, items remain within the public domain;
- It is unlikely to damage public trust in the RHSV;
- It is likely to increase the public benefit derived from the RHSV collection.

When formal approval has been given to deselect or deaccession an item from the collection, it may be:

- offered to another organisation by gift, transfer or exchange;
- repatriated or restored to a rightful claimant;
- sold;
- recycled;
- destroyed; or
- returned to the donor/previous owner.

No member, employee or volunteer of the RHSV, or any person associated with the Council or the Collections Committee, should receive an unfair advantage if purchasing the item.

The Collections Manager, when making a deselection recommendation to the Collections Committee, will also recommend the proposed method(s) of disposal, and the priority in which different methods should be used.

The Collections Committee, when making a deaccessioning recommendation to Council, will also recommend the proposed method(s) of disposal, and the priority different methods should be accorded.

Where the RHSV has acquired items subject to conditions of disposal, these requirements must be complied with.

Where the RHSV has received financial assistance for acquisitions from an outside source, disposal may require the consent of all parties who contributed to the purchase or controlled the funding.

Any monies received by the RHSV from the disposal of items must be employed solely for the upgrading of the collection either by purchase or by conservation.

The RHSV will document all deselection and deaccessioning decisions, and all consequent disposal activities. At a minimum:

- Deselections should be documented via the minutes of meetings of the Collections Committee; and
- Deaccessions should be documented via the minutes of meetings of the Collections Committee and the Council, and in the catalogue database(s).

Note that detailed procedures for deselection and deaccessioning have been prepared.

## 8 Disposal of the Collection in the event the RHSV is wound up

In the event that the RHSV is wound up the collection will be disposed of in accordance with the relevant clause covering surplus assets in the Constitution.

## 9 Review

A previous version of this Policy was adopted by the Council of the RHSV in October 2016. This updated version incorporates the revised Purposes of the Society, which were included in the revised Constitution adopted in May 2019.

The Collections Committee will review this Policy every three years, or as required.

## 10 DATE OF ENDORSEMENT

Endorsed	October 2016	
Reviewed	July 2019	Incorporating new Purposes adopted with the revised Constitution in May 2019
Endorsed	August 2019	
Revisions	September 2020	Incorporating recommendations of MAP Review

Review date		
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