



RHSV COLLECTION POLICY 2025

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

The Collection is one of the Five Pillars of the Society as set out in the Strategic Plan adopted in July 2025.

1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE COLLECTION POLICY

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

2. ALIGNMENT

This Policy is aligned with:

- The Purposes of the Society, defined in clause 2.2 of the Constitution <https://www.historyvictoria.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/RHSV-Constitution-agreed-at-AGM-May-2024.pdf>
- The RHSV Strategic Plan adopted in July 2025
- The RHSV Values as outlined at <https://www.historyvictoria.org.au/about/society-objectives/>
- Victoria's framework of historical themes. Melbourne : Heritage Council of Victoria, 2010
- <https://www.heritage.vic.gov.au/research-and-publications/framework-of-historical-themes>
- International Council of Museums Code of Ethics for Museums <https://icom.museum/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/ICOM-code-En-web.pdf>

3. WHAT THE SOCIETY COLLECTS

3.1. HISTORIC PERIOD

The RHSV collects research material relating to the history of the area now known as Victoria up to the present day. Artefacts relating to Indigenous People in the period before European settlement are not collected as it is considered that these belong to the communities involved. However, documents relating to pre-settlement landscape and the lives of Indigenous communities are collected.

3.2. FOCUS OF THE COLLECTION

The Collection supports the Purposes of the RHSV as set out in its Constitution. The following Purposes are relevant:

- Purpose 2.1: promoting research, knowledge, understanding and enjoyment of our histories to the widest possible audience;
- Purpose 2.2: developing and conserving the collection of Victorian history, with a special interest in Melbourne;
- Purpose 2.3: promoting all aspects of Victorian history through exhibitions, publications and events for its members and the general public;
- Purpose 2.6: acting as an advocate for the Victorian history sector and in the conservation and promotion of the cultural and built heritage of Victoria.
- The Society collects in all aspects of Victorian history with a special emphasis on the Melbourne Central Business District.
- The RHSV has regard for similar collections held by the State Library of Victoria, Prahran Mechanics Institute, Melbourne University Archives, Victorian Parliamentary Library and similar organisations with a view to preventing unnecessary duplication.

3.3. SPECIAL INTEREST AREAS (To be reviewed every two years)

The Society is particularly interested in developing the following areas of the collection:

- Late 20th and 21st century documents and images
- Material relating to migration to Victoria after 1945
- Collections of community activist groups
- Women's History
- Local heritage studies
- Social history, heritage and conservation issues
- Ephemeral items in line with the existing strengths of the collection

3.4. ITEMS TO BE COLLECTED

Items are to be collected subject to the RHSV's strategic directions and practical capacities and in line with the priorities identified in this policy.

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

3.5 ITEMS WHICH ARE NOT COLLECTED

Items which are not related to Victorian history

- Hazardous materials
- Large objects unless there is a strategic reason to acquire them.
- Indigenous artefacts as noted in 3.1 above.

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

The RHSV does not accept items on permanent or long-term loan

4. 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 clause 4(b).
- b. All other materials. These include manuscripts, archives, images, maps, objects, scrapbooks, ephemera and other unique items. There is an assumption that these will be retained permanently.

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 gives 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 is 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. CONTRACTURAL 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. See the Deed of Gift document for conditions around copyright and reproduction rights.
- d) No commitment can be made by the RHSV to permanently display any item in the collection.
- e) The RHSV includes 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 Director) 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.
- i) If the donor wishes to have the donation valued for tax purposes, he or she is responsible for arranging and paying for the valuation to meet Australian Tax Office requirements.

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 strategic method for strengthening the collection so that the collection supports the purposes of the RHSV.

Removal can be undertaken via the process of *deselection* (see clause 7.2) or *deaccessioning* (see clause 7.3).

7.2 DESELECTION OF LIBRARY MATERIALS

Items in the Library sub-collection (as defined in clause 4(a)) may be 'deselected' or 'weeded', as is frequently done with regard to circulating stock and duplicates in most public libraries.

Deselection decisions should be guided by the criteria provided in clause 7.4.

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

Each deselection recommendation should include the proposed method(s) of disposal; these should either:

- Relate to the guidance provided by clause 7.4; or
- Specify an internal transfer to another of the Society's sub-collections (e.g. when an item in the Library sub-collection is identified as rare, it should be transferred to the Rare Books sub-collection).

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

The Collections Manager is authorised to dispose of duplicate items from the Library sub-collection in accordance with clause 7.4(a) and without consultation with the Collections Committee, providing that the title is retained in the catalogue and continues to be represented in the collection.

7.3 DEACCESSIONING OF NON-LIBRARY MATERIALS

Items in any of the sub-collections defined in clause 4(b) are subject to this clause and to any related policy and procedure.

Deaccessioning decisions must be based on the criteria provided in clause 7.4.

Recommendations for deaccessioning may be based on information received via consultation (including with the former owner, if appropriate).

Recommendations for deaccessioning should be prepared by the Collections Manager (or another responsible member of staff or volunteers) for consideration by the Collections Committee.

The Collections Committee is required to submit its recommendations for deaccessioning to the Council for approval.

Only the Council of the RHSV can approve the deaccessioning of an item.

The Council of the RHSV should not act unilaterally but should be guided in each deaccessioning decision by advice received from the Collections Committee,

7.4 CRITERIA FOR REMOVAL

Deselection and de-accession 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) The item not compliant with the current Collection Policy
- c) The item can no longer be suitably maintained / used or 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

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

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

10. RELATED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

- **Deaccessioning and disposal criteria 2025**
- **Deed of gift : material acknowledgement 2025**
- **Form : Offer to donate material to the RHSV 2024**