



MUSEUM OF THE ROYAL PHARMACEUTICAL SOCIETY OF GREAT BRITAIN

1 LAMBETH HIGH STREET, LONDON SE1 7JN

Offering objects to the Museum

Introduction

The Museum of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain has strong and important collections representing the history, science and practice of pharmacy, and the development of pharmacy as a profession in Great Britain. Since its establishment in 1842, the collections have grown to about 45,000 items. The majority of these objects have been generously donated by members and members of the public over the last 160 years.

The Museum is always happy to consider donations that will enhance the breadth and depth of its collections. This information sheet will help to explain our collection procedures and what to do if you think you have an object that the Museum may be interested in.

The Museum is Accredited under the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council Accreditation Scheme (for an explanation of this please see section on Accreditation below).

Please note, the Museum's staff are unable to give financial valuations.

I would like to donate an object to the Museum. What should I do?

First you will need to find out whether the Museum is able or would like to accept your donation. The easiest way to do this is to contact us to discuss it on museum@rpsqb.org or 020 7572 2210. It may be helpful to read the Museum's collecting guidelines (a summary of our collecting policy printed below) to help you understand the thinking behind the Museum's collections.

To save you unnecessary effort, it is always worth making contact rather than sending an item speculatively through the post. We want to make sure that your potential gift is properly identified and cared for.

Please provide as much information as possible about the objects – for example, who dispensed or owned them, and where and why they were used.

If you have a large number of objects, it is very useful to the Museum to be able to see a list or photographs of the object(s) in order to make our decision. Staff can sometimes make site visits if a large amount of material needs to be assessed.

If you have an object relating to the history of pharmacy that you do not think fits our collecting policy, please do contact us for advice. We can advise you of other museums that may be interested, so that your object ends up in the most appropriate place.

If you would like to leave the Museum a bequest of an object or collection it is imperative that you discuss this with us before making any provisions in your will to prevent any future distress and legal difficulties.

Collecting Guidelines

What we collect is determined by the Museum's Acquisitions and Disposals Policy. This document is a plan that restricts what we collect to a manageable level, and makes sure that we don't have objects in our collection which would be better off in another museum. It takes into consideration our resources to conserve, document and store items, so that we can preserve them for the future.

If you would like to see a copy of the full Acquisitions and Disposals Policy, please contact us.

The Museum is interested in accepting the object(s) I have offered, what happens next?

We will arrange with you the best way to get the objects to us. We may arrange to come and collect them, ask you to send them through the post or choose another method. We would usually reimburse any expenses incurred by you in donating an object to the Museum.

We will issue a receipt (a Museum Entry Form) for the deposit of objects. This will record the name and type of object, and along with your name and address*. We are very interested in what you know about your object(s) and will also record any information about the object(s) on the Entry Form so that its history will be recorded for posterity.

The transfer of ownership from you to the Museum does not take place immediately you hand over the object. Each new object is considered by Museum staff in relation to the collecting policy (which may involve some research), what the on-costs of acquiring the object(s) are, and what the object's needs are. This process can sometimes take us a few weeks. Once we have established that the objects fall within the Museum's collecting policy, you will be asked to sign a Transfer of Title (TOT) form, to transfer the legal ownership of the donation to the Museum. It is important that you keep a copy of this form for your records.

Each object will then be listed, labelled, catalogued and carefully stored. All of the Museum's collections are available for research and educational purposes, and can be accessed by prior appointment. Please note that, due to limited exhibition space, only a small proportion of the collections are on display at any one time.

It may be that for a variety of reasons, we can't accept your object. Please don't be offended. We may already have similar items. Your object may simply be too big, or it may be a type that we don't collect. Any items not accepted will be returned to the owner or disposed of according to the donor's wishes.

Please note that in exceptional circumstances we may be able to buy objects.

Why does the Museum ask people to assign the copyright attached to their donation where they can?

The Museum receives many requests for copies of material in its collections, for a variety of purposes including research and private study. Whilst copyright law allows us to provide copies of some material for non-commercial research and private study without seeking the copyright owner's permission, the need for authors and publishers to obtain permission can involve the Museum in significant amounts of work.

Assigning the copyright to the Museum would reduce the administration involved in handling such requests, thereby enabling more staff time to be spent on caring for the Museum's collections and giving the opportunity for the Museum to raise income which would help it carry out the rest of its functions, such as caring for the collections.

I don't want to give my object(s) away; I just want the museum to have it on permanent loan

Museums distinguish between short-term loans for specific purposes, such as exhibitions, and long-term or 'permanent' loans. Because looking after objects takes a lot of time and resources, an Accredited museum will only take an object on long-term loan if there is a good reason why it cannot be a gift. In this case, we would only borrow items for a specified reason and period (usually up to a maximum of five years). Short-term loans can be renewed, if both parties agree.

What if I have other special conditions?

In order that we can look after your object(s) as best we can and make them accessible to as many people as possible, we would rather that you did not place any special conditions on your donation to the Museum. However, we understand that some people wish to do this, and so we will discuss any requirements you may have.

Will my donation be kept forever?

For all practicable purposes, Museum objects are retained for ever. Once a Transfer of Title form has been signed, ownership of a gift passes to the Museum. The Museum's Acquisitions and Disposals Policy contains a strong presumption against disposal. However, in exceptional circumstances, the Museum may dispose of items, in accordance with the Museums Association's Code of Ethics for Museums (www.museumsassociation.org), and with the Society's Council's approval. This means that, in the first instance, the object(s) must be offered to other Accredited museums in the UK. If this initial offer is not taken up, other areas would be explored, including sale. Any funds received from such a sale would only be used for the purchase of new objects for the Museum's collections.

The Museum Accreditation Scheme – why is this relevant to me?

If you give, loan or bequeath something to an Accredited Museum, such as the Museum of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain, you can be confident that the museum meets minimum standards of management and collections care. These standards are set by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, and there is a rigorous application process. With an Accredited museum, you can rest assured that your object is going to a good home.

*This information will be kept in accordance with the Royal Pharmaceutical Society's Data Protection Policy. This is available on the Society's website www.rpsgb.org as well as in print format. Please contact us if you would like us to send you a copy.

This information sheet is also available in a large font format. Please contact us on 020 7572 2210 or email museum@rpsgb.org and we will send you a copy.