

## Scenario

You are the new archivist at a long-established national professional body (the Royal Society for the Promotion of Dental Hygiene), founded 1767 as the Amiable Brotherhood of Barber-Surgeons' Assistants. Originally based in London, the organisation underwent a number of postwar changes and is now based in the New Town of Newtown. The Royal Society for Promotion of Dental Hygiene aims to promote the interests of its members and provide guidance on advancements in dental hygiene to its members.

At present, the archive does not have any formal policies. Access can be arranged on Tuesdays and Wednesdays at your discretion (this has been available for many years, with volunteer support).

As part of your new role, you have been asked by your manager to apply for Archive Service Accreditation. You have decided to begin by drafting a governing policy for the archive, which will also satisfy multiple requirements of the Accreditation Standard:

- 1.1 Mission Statement
- 1.2 Governance
- [1.4 Storage]
- [1.6 Workforce]
- [2.1 Collections Management]
- 2.2 Collections Development policy
- 2.3 Collections Information policy
- 2.4 Collections Care and Conservation policy
- 3.1 Access policy

Today's session will help you to think through these elements and what might go into each of these sections, focusing on 6 sections which can readily fit into any such foundation policy.

You will contribute to at least 2 such sections, sharing ideas with your peers. Nothing has to be perfect and finalised!

You won't, of course, be able to decide everything alone. But you can flag up where you need to discuss and consult to progress to a full draft.

**Context: the organisation**

RSPoDH agreed to create an archivist post at its Annual Convocation, February 2014. Your formal reporting line is to the Librarian, then to Head of Resources. RSPoDH also has a Heritage Committee, composed of interested active and retired Dental Hygienists who hope to see the organisation become better known.

**Context: people**

You are the first archivist to be employed by this organisation, following recommendations made by an external review of the RSPoDH's information resources and records management. Until now, the archive was maintained as part of the library, and was the special care of Mrs A.N. Body, a former Dental Hygienist with a keen interest in volunteering to support the organisation's work. She remains on the Heritage Committee. You are the only employee of RSPoDH to have any archives responsibility, formal training or wider archives and records management experience.

**Context: resources**

The archive is housed in a secure storeroom just off the library where collections are consulted when you have external researchers. Conditions are not ideal, but most material is boxed and there are no signs of significant pest infestations or mould. Smoke alarms are fitted. The shelves are library stock, and are overfull. There is also a modern records store ("the Secretary's room") containing a quantity of unappraised modern records. RSPoDH now creates virtually all its records electronically. You have a small annual budget for preservation supplies, but are also expected to pursue external funding opportunities to develop the archive further.

**Context: heritage**

RSPoDH wants its heritage assets to become better known, and to raise public awareness of the history of dental hygiene in the UK. They have a part-time librarian for their collection of rare dental hygiene texts, and a museum, which has a 0.5FTE curator and lots of volunteer support, mainly from the Heritage Committee members. In the local area, Newtown also has a volunteer-run museum, and the University of New Town has an Archives and Special Collections department (2.4 FTE staff). The former county of Oldshire maintains a joint archives service for its former constituent parts. RSPoDH has good links with the British College of Dental Surgeons in London, which runs a museum, library and archive.

**Context: collections**

The collections (c.75 cu m) comprise core institutional records including a complete run of governing body minutes, and good though incomplete coverage of its committees 1790-present. Membership records from 1824-1978. Examination papers 1867-1990. Records of the wartime National Committees for Tooth Decay (related material is also held at The National Archives). Some personal papers of eminent dental hygienists (mostly c1920-60). Papers of the Tooth Fairy Brigade (children's club), 1975-89. The unappraised modern records in the separate store are thought to be mostly campaign and committee papers, and possibly some more examination papers. Collections are almost entirely paper based, though there are some floppy disks from the 1990s which are believed to have been deposited by the membership section. There is a *Guide to RSPoDH Collections* published in 1989 by a former librarian. It outlines the institutional records held, with a paragraph about the work of each section or committee, and covering dates.

## Workshop outcomes

Groups were each given an Accreditation requirement to look at and some 'questions to consider', to focus thoughts on what could go into a policy in this area. Their notes are included in 'suggestions and responses'. All requirements were at least briefly considered by at least two groups.

Any useful thoughts arising which didn't fit directly into the part of the policy under discussion were added to 'notes for later'. Some relate to the planning requirements of Accreditation [1.3, 2.2.2, 2.3.2, 2.4.2, 2.4.4, 3.2], which in a small service could potentially benefit from this approach: a single strategic plan addressing the range of activity.

This is not a rigid template for a policy, but it breaks down the kind of thinking that would be useful. Such a policy could be signed off at high level within the parent organisation (where possible), cementing its commitment to maintain an effective archive service and giving staff formal support.

1.1 Mission statement
<p><i>Questions to consider:</i></p> <p>What might be included to make this meaningful? What key terms or phrases might resonate with the RSPoDH? Which other mission statements (or equivalent) might you want to take into account/link to? Should you be writing a standalone mission statement for the archive?</p>
<p><i>Suggestions and responses:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To preserve collections</li><li>• To give access to collections</li><li>• To promote collections</li><li>• To give guidance/information on collections</li><li>• Find out what the RSPoDH's own mission statement is and link ours to that in a supportive way</li><li>• Have a mission statement covering library/archive/museum [xref governance: are these separate or joint services?]</li><li>• 'To promote heritage assets and raise public awareness of dental hygiene in the UK'</li><li>• OR 'The 'library' maintains, uphold and promotes the outstanding collections in its care, on Dental Hygiene and related subjects. It provides access to these collections, and collects and preserves the Society's rich history'</li></ul>
<p><i>Notes for later:</i></p>

- Who needs to ratify the mission statement? Who can help us to decide on it? Do we need to do this before writing the full policy – in case others fundamentally disagree about the purpose of the archives?
- Funding opportunities to support the archive: assuming it can't all be funded internally, worth including in this policy that external avenues will be pursued
- Outreach policy [xref to access policy]
- Start by looking at parent body mission statement and strategy documents, make sure it ties in

## 1.2 Governance

### *Questions to consider*

What is the legal basis for the archive's existence? Is it separate to RSPoDH, the library and/or the museum and does that matter? How would it be useful to state in this policy?

What is the mechanism for reporting upwards? How often should this happen? How high are you aiming to report?

What is the relationship with the Heritage Committee and how formal is that reporting?

Suggestions and responses:

- Refer to RSPoDH founding document and decision of Convocation to employ archivist
- Legal status is linked to RSPoDH, not separate body - that's fine, this is not in a trust etc
- Is the archive part of the library or the museum or both? Needs to be clear
- Reporting flowchart would be useful: confirm who reports to who in the organisation
- Who are the Heritage Committee and what is their role? Does archivist report to them formally or informally? Are they the decision-makers for the service, or a stakeholder forum whose advice may be sought?
- How the new archivist's role impacts on the organisation and people who previously covered parts of the role
- Archivist given authority to make day to day decisions – perhaps in line with this policy as a whole?
- Is there an option to beef up role in records management as well?

Notes for later:

- Volunteers policy would help in this area: what is their role – and their relationship to Heritage Committee?
- Terms of Reference for Heritage Committee – do they exist? If not, can archivist help with them? Even if they aren't the decision-makers, they are important contributors and relationship must be maintained

## 1.6 Resources: workforce

*Questions to consider:*

Who is employed/charged with leading the archive service?

Are there honorary officers elsewhere in RoSPDH?

Can/should you formalise a volunteer policy relating to the Heritage Committee or beyond? Is the role of volunteers in the service a core part of its mission/therefore policy?

This was a reserve requirement which we brought into discussion of various areas, especially governance. It was agreed that because of the significant role of volunteers and the new professional role, it would probably be useful to specify something about the roles of both in a single governing policy. This crossed over with issues like 'what is the archivist's relationship with the Heritage Committee?' and 'Are volunteers part of the service's governance as well as its workforce?'

## **2.2 Collections development policy**

*Questions to consider:*

Is collecting purely internal to RSPoDH from now on?

What should the archive collect? On what terms?

What does it definitely not collect (format, provenance etc)? What happens to that material (if relevant)?

Are there collecting relationships which should be defined specifically in a policy (e.g. with another local archive or with the museum?)

*Suggestions and responses:*

- What is the acquisition process?
- Is collecting reactive or sometimes proactive?
- Priority for core RSoPDH records → so what are these? What are 'the RSPoDH records'? [xref to mission: why are we doing this?]
- Collecting of internal RS papers and external/other material – considered case by case by the Heritage Committee? [xref to governance: who is the appropriate body to approve this?]
- What formats can be included and collected? What is not taken? (e.g. duplicates, printed external material, AV material possibly) (also perhaps branch records, papers of staff who are not Fellows: categories of record types which aren't core → offer elsewhere)
- What support does that involve from elsewhere in the organisation: specifically, IT support for digital preservation
- What is relationship with RS museum? Who collects what? (Objects, photographs, maps)
- What is relationship with other related bodies and what do they collect?
- Purchases? Is fundraising part of the archive's activity?

- Approach to disposal/deaccessioning – what is procedure, who approves this, what are the acceptable outcomes (transfer, destruction)? What do we do about material offered which we do not accept?

Notes for later:

Acquisitions policy and procedures needed?

Loans policy/procedures?

Link to collections information: e.g. accessions register, policy on description: what happens after it's taken in?

### 2.3.1 Collections Information policy

*Questions to consider:*

What state of description are you aiming for for the collections (e.g. standards, ideal scenarios)?

What strategies will be followed to achieve this (e.g. prioritisation, external support, internal support, levels of description)?

(NB this doesn't just mean cataloguing – also accessioning, documenting ownership and intellectual property rights)

*Suggestions and responses:*

- Currently limited (printed guide) but a good starting point [get the guide online?]: start with a short history of where the service is starting from
- Include the justification for undertaking any cataloguing: to enable access and use
- Note key risks: are there Data Protection risks from membership records, children's club records?
- Decide on desirable level of cataloguing: initially perhaps aiming for file level, for speedy access, with detail coming later
- Decide on software – relationship with library catalogue? Museum object records? Joint interface?
- Standards/which cataloguing guidelines being used
- What information will be kept on incoming collections from now on?
- What information is available on collections already taken in?
- Reference documentation of other areas and how this is kept – e.g. appraisal, disposal, recording preservation/storage issues and requirements
- Resource discovery: Archives Hub etc
- Prioritising what to catalogue – establish the principle that there will be priorities!
- Institutional commitment to online catalogue in long term [xref 3.1 Access policy]

Notes for later:

Visit the Royal College of Dentistry to see what they are doing – can we connect with their work? Authority records etc?

Timeframe for tackling: ‘collections information plan’ aka cataloguing strategy for next 2-5 years

Prioritisation of cataloguing in detail: what criteria, top priorities (e.g. core records, unknown risks, role in access/outreach)

#### **2.4.1 Collections care and conservation policy**

*Questions to consider:*

What state of preservation are you aiming for for the collections (e.g. standards, ideal scenarios)?

What strategies will be followed to achieve this (e.g. prioritisation, external support, internal support, levels of active conservation)?

Can/should you formally state where the records are going to be held? [could be part of 1.4 – resources: premises – so you could draw in another requirement here]

*Suggestions and responses:*

- Commitment to ongoing improvements in preservation, to ensure collections survive and to improve their condition as possible
- Space and appropriate storage, building management
- Reference to PD5454 and related standards as a guide/aspiration though recognising where current stores do not (in some ways cannot) meet
- Professional archivist in post [xref 1.6 Workforce]
- Dedicated reading room for secure access
- Environmental controls
- Commit to a conservation survey including appraisal, and packaging survey, as first steps [may be part of 2.4.2 Collection care plans]
- Approach to active conservation: is it possible, does it need external funding?
- Need for support from appropriate parts of the organisation: specifically maintenance and IT for stores and for digital preservation

*Notes for later:*

- Also need reading room regulations, document handling guidance
- And a disaster plan!
- Collections care plan: following on from results surveys, prioritise feasible activity, phases over 5/10/15 years – link to fundraising in future plans
- Procedures for reprographics (cameras in the reading room?)

### 3.1 Access policy

#### *Questions to consider:*

Who has access to the collection and on what basis (general public, internal users, academic researchers)?

What restrictions on access, if any, apply (e.g. practical, legal, preservation-based)?

How is access provided (e.g. supervised research, educational visits, online exhibitions)?

#### Suggestions and responses:

- Is access free? If not, who is charged?
- Is access different for RSoPDH members/staff vs external researchers?
- Provision for disabled access onsite: state any known limitations and commit to reasonable efforts to accommodate needs of readers
- Opening hours: set some regular ones and publish them [not necessarily in policy but state there will be set opening times?]
- If access has to be by appointment, publicise this and how to book an appointment [again, detail may not be in policy, but principle will be]
- Is access offered equally to all or on specific conditions (e.g. academic researchers)? Make sure this doesn't discriminate under Equalities Act.
- Reflect legal considerations around granting access, especially Data Protection: all records which are made accessible will be reviewed in advance for closure issues?
- Provision for copying
- Position on copyright – the Society's own records, and any other known
- Provision for answering enquiries: how much research will be done, any charges, what is feasible
- Position re exhibitions/loans
- Any outreach/education commitments
- Commitment to information online – online catalogue when possible
- Commitment to other online sharing, e.g. digitisation, if relevant

#### Notes for later:

- Reading room regulations/handling guidelines
- Registration/membership procedures, if any
- Publish online as much as possible on things like cost of copies, reading room rules, any ID new readers must bring, disabled access provision, charging for enquiries etc
- While catalogue is not available, information online outlining what is held and what is not (e.g. no early records survive)
- A lot of what's listed may be outlined briefly at policy level and implemented in planning and in practice – the detail doesn't all have to go into this one document