

# COLLECTIONS POLICY

# DOCUMENT CONTROL

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## 1. Principles

The Object of the Society is “the study of railway signalling and operation in the British Isles and overseas”. In support of the Object, the Society maintains an archive of material which includes hard copy material (comprising original documents or copies thereof) and ‘soft copy’ material (i.e. documents in digital format). This policy sets out how new material shall be acquired and how the Archive is maintained.

The Society aims to be a principal custodian of railway signalling records, and selective operating material where this contains information having a bearing on signalling, ensuring their long-term preservation for posterity, and to make these records accessible to members and to the public. The criterion for the acquisition and retention of material in the archive shall be its relevance to railway signalling in the British Isles and overseas.

The archive is focused on the information content of its holdings, and items shall be acquired for the knowledge they contain rather than for attributes such as their physical medium. In deciding whether to acquire or retain a document, the key consideration shall be whether the document contains sufficient significant historical information on railway signalling to merit preservation and public access. The Society does not maintain a collection of signalling artefacts.

The Society collects published books whose principal subject is railway signalling and operations (where this has a bearing on signalling), but does not collect books on more general railway subjects. The Society does not collect timetables, although this limitation excludes such as Working Timetables containing appendices wherein operating instructions are to be found, or other information affecting signalling.

The Society also maintains a photographic collection. Whilst this is covered by a dedicated photographic collections policy, it should be noted that photograph albums, or photographs illustrating material held within the archive, may be retained in the archive for convenience and completeness.

## 2. Active Collecting

The Society shall attempt to acquire proactively relevant signalling-related material. In deciding whether to make a particular acquisition, the following criteria shall be considered:

- Does the acquisition of the item support the Object of the Society?
- Does the item add new information or enhance information already available within the Society's archive or other accessible collections?
- How valuable in research terms is the information the item contains?
- Is there an alternative means of acquiring the information contained in the item – eg by scanning or copying to an appropriate acceptable standard?
- Will the information become inaccessible should the Society fail to acquire it?
- Is a fair price being asked?

The Society allocates a budget to be used specifically for archive purchases judged to meet the above criteria. The budget holder is expected to operate within the total allocated budget, but an appeal to the trustees may be made for additional funds in the case of exceptional material becoming available which is otherwise unaffordable.

It is a matter of historical fact that much material deemed irrelevant or unlikely to be of future interest has been lost through wanton disposal. Society policy shall be to acquire signalling-related material of broad scope/whatever its nature, if it could conceivably be of relevance to future researchers. In this context, it must be remembered that 'modern' signalling of whatever type or technology has a relatively short service life, becoming obsolete in timescales unheard of in the era of mechanical and electro-mechanical systems. The probability there will be interest in information related to such systems/technologies from future researchers shall guide the Society's decision to acquire it.

### 3. Donations and Bequests

Archive material in the form of donations and bequests from members and others may be acquired. Individuals considering leaving all or part of their personal collections to the Society shall be encouraged to notify the Archivist (or other appointed officer/trustee), so that a dialogue can take place well in advance of the arrival of any such bequest. It is also important that members intending to bequeath material make their wishes clear to their representative(s) – such as spouses/civil partners, other family members, or executors\* – to ensure the importance of transferring the material is appreciated.

The Society is not bound to accept donations and bequests and will do so only subject to stated conditions, as set out in the Notes for Donors document (available from the Society). A key condition for acceptance is the right of the Society to dispose of all or part of a donated or bequeathed collection (eg by transfer to another Society or body, or by sale to Society members or on the open market). Funds raised from such disposals shall be used for the benefit of the Society.

\* Note that including instructions within a Will binds executors to carrying out such instructions.

### 4. Digitisation and Conservation

Where possible, Society collections shall be digitised, with the goal of storing them in a facility readily accessible remotely by authorised users and in a manner which supports the Object. Long-term preservation of the (digitised) material will be thereby secured and user experience greatly increased through easy access.

The Society may acquire material which exists primarily or solely in digital form, applying the same criteria for acquisition as for physical records.

Where the information contained in an existing document cannot sensibly be preserved in digital form alone, appropriate measures will be taken to ensure the permanent preservation of the original document. Documents which are fully preserved in digital form may be disposed of or placed in long-term 'deep' storage.

The Society shall be proactive in ensuring the digital storage environment remains fit for purpose and is robust in terms of such as currency of hardware and software, security against unauthorized access, or attack, provision for system back-ups etc.

Digitisation of the Archive will permit the Society to reduce the size and scope of the physical storage repository, potentially limiting its purpose to long-term secure storage with limited or no general access except by authorised personnel. Due care shall be taken to preserve physical Archive materials which are to be retained for the long term.