

Signalling Record Society

(Founded 1969 for the study of Railway Signalling in the British Isles and Overseas)

COLLECTIONS POLICY

Principles

The object of the Society is “the study of railway signalling and operation in the British Isles and overseas”. In support of this object the Society maintains an Archive of documentary material (including digital material) relevant to railway signalling in the British Isles and overseas. This policy sets out how the Archive shall be maintained and added to.

Collecting documents is not itself the object of the Society and it is not the Society's role aggressively to seek out material for its collection. Instead the Society aims to be a custodian of railway signalling records for which no other suitable keeper has been found, and to make these records accessible to members and to the public.

The key aspect of any decision whether to acquire or retain a document should be whether the document conveys historical information on railway signalling significant enough to merit preservation and public access. The Archive will focus on the information content of its holdings; items should be acquired for the knowledge they contain rather than for any attributes of their physical medium.

The Society does not maintain a collection of artefacts. The Society will continue to collect published books whose principal subject is railway signalling, but will not collect books on more general railway subjects. The Society does not normally collect timetables (as against appendices).

The Society maintains a separate photographic collection, which is held on the Society's behalf by the Kidderminster Railway Museum. It is outside the scope of this policy. Photograph albums, or photographs illustrating other material, may however be held in the Archive.

Active collecting

The Society should be in a position to undertake a ‘rescue purchase’ where documents of historical value relevant to railway signalling have failed to find a suitable home and will otherwise become or remain inaccessible to members and to the public. In considering whether it is appropriate for the Society to make such a purchase, the following criteria will be considered:

- Does the acquisition of the document support the object of the Society?
- How valuable in research terms is the information it contains?
- Is there an alternative way of acquiring the information contained – for example by scanning or copying to appropriate standards?
- Does the document duplicate information already available within the Society's Archive or other accessible collections?
- Is a fair price being asked?

The Society will maintain an Archive Fund which will be available for use on such purchases.

Donations and bequests

In addition material will come to the Archive passively, most often in the form of donations and bequests from members and others. The Society is not bound to accept donations and bequests and will do so only subject to conditions satisfactory to the Society. These conditions (set out in full in Notes for Donors available on request from the Society's Archivist) include the right of the Society to dispose of any part of a collection (by transfer to another Society or body, or by sale to members or on the open market) if the Committee so decides.

Members who are considering leaving all or part of their personal collections to the Society are respectfully invited to notify the Archivist (or another Committee member) accordingly so that a dialogue can be entered into well in advance of the arrival of any bequest. It is also of course important that members in that situation make their wishes clear to their spouses, families or executors, who may not be aware of the importance of the material.

Digitisation and conservation

The Society has embarked on a programme of digitising its collections, with the two-fold aim of promoting access to the material and ensuring its long-term preservation. The priority will be to digitise Weekly and Periodical Operating Notices. The whole programme will inevitably be for the long term.

The Society will collect records which exist primarily or solely in digital form, subject to the same considerations as paper-based records. Paper copies of such digital records will be made and kept only where that is necessary to ensure their permanent preservation, or for some other sufficient reason.

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 or (where appropriate) of a paper copy. Documents that do not meet this criterion may however be disposed of once their information content has been digitised or copied.

The Society will put in place a programme to ensure that the digital archive is transferred to new media at an appropriate time, so as to ensure its continued accessibility as media and software evolve.

Dissolution

The event of the Society's being dissolved up is catered for by the Rules. In that event it is the declared wish of the Society that the Committee (or any other person dealing with the Society's assets) should use their best endeavours to dispose of the Archive as a whole to a suitable organisation which would continue to assure public access.

8 September 2011