



Library of the Religious Society of Friends in Britain

A collection policy for pictures

1. Terms of reference

The policy relates to the Picture Collection of the Library and complements the Library's Collection Policy (2002). The Picture Collection is defined as all forms of visual images. It comprises photographs, prints, drawings, paintings, posters and postcards, and some film, videotape and digital videodisks (DVDs). There is some overlap with visual material held as an integral part of manuscript collections or as part of the Society's other archives.

2. Collection criteria

The primary function of the picture collection is to illustrate the Society of Friends, its members and their work, past and present. It complements the book and manuscript collections of the Library in areas such as biography, history of Quakerism, meeting house history, Quaker schools and Quaker social service at home and overseas. It includes both the picture archive of the Society itself and items collected by the Library. Copies of most pictures are made available to researchers for use in publication as well as research, on condition the copyright rests with the Society (see **5.2.** below).

In the past some items were accepted solely because they were the work of Quaker artists, professional or amateur, even if they lacked a specific Quaker content. Now we would collect such material only if it added to an existing collection of historic significance or was an integral part of a larger collection of important material. For example, we have some sketches made by Elizabeth Fry as a girl, when she was taught to draw by Norfolk artist John Crome; these, though not on Quaker themes, are an adjunct to her journals, which are held in the manuscript collections.

3. Use of the collection

The collection is used by individual researchers seeking pictures for publications and university theses; by picture researchers working for

publishers and the media; by meetings looking for exhibition material, and by central departments looking for illustrations for their publications.

Increasingly enquiries from publishers come by e-mail and require an image sent in electronic format. The acquisition of a scanner enables us to do this quite easily. However, many researchers still prefer to visit us and browse the copy print collection (see **8.1.** below). Browsing is at present the only effective way to ensure that they see all that is available. Those who require more instant service have to rely on choices made from copies made for them by the Pictures Librarian.

We normally charge for the copies, whether as prints made for us by a photographic laboratory, or in digital format scanned in-house. We can also charge reproduction fees for copyright material. However, reproduction fees are generally waived when it seems appropriate for outreach purposes; and we often request publishers send us copies of the book for the Library in lieu of fees.

4. Types of material

4.1. Photographs

The photograph collection includes negatives, positive transparencies, (including 35 mm slides and older glass slides) and positive prints. Some of the prints held have no negative other than an inter-negative made from the print. In other cases the negative is part of the historical collection. Increasingly, the collection includes images that are born digital, i.e. made and held only in electronic format, usually on CDs. This is in addition to digitised versions of the older photographs. It is possible for a single image to be available in several forms – negative, positive transparency, positive print, and digital format. The photographs include pictures of other items in the Library's collection, e.g. manuscripts, books, costume and other museum exhibits.

4.2. Prints

The collection includes prints made from a variety of processes, including etchings, lithographs, and mezzotints. It also includes some photographic copies of older prints.

The most substantial discrete group is a collection of 119 prints from 99 etchings by Robert Spence (1870-1964). These were made between 1892 and 1954 and illustrate the life and work of George Fox. We also have a number of early 19th century caricatures. It seems unlikely that the print collection will be added to substantively since appropriate material rarely becomes available, and early prints are now very expensive. However, should items of special Quaker significance ever come on to the market, attempts should be made to purchase them if at all possible.

4.3. Posters and postcards

The poster collection is a growing collection, since it is part of the central archive of Britain Yearly Meeting - most posters in the past were published by central departments. Now nearly all posters are produced by Quaker Communications Department, who routinely deposit two copies of each with the Library. A few posters issued by meetings or groups within or linked to BYM are also held. The collection therefore reflects Quaker concerns, e.g. peace, relief of poverty and temperance mostly from late 1920s to the present day. Some early posters from the 1880s onwards are also held in volumes in the printed tract collection.

The postcards also include some issued by central offices or meetings within BYM, and others illustrating places or people associated with Quakerism.

4.4. Paintings and drawings

The collection includes oil paintings, watercolours, and drawings – some framed, some mounted but unframed, and some unmounted and unframed. Some of the most valuable items in the collection are those which are painted by artists who achieved prominence outside the Society, e.g. J. Doyle Penrose, Jerry Barrett, and Malcolm Drummond. We also possess some pictures that are valuable for historical reasons, such as the 17th century paintings of a Quaker meeting attributed to Egbert van Heemskirk.

This is another collection that is unlikely to be added to frequently, as with prints (see above **4.2**)

4.5. Moving pictures – film, videotape and videodisk

The archival film made by the Society from the 1920s to the 1940s has been deposited with the National Film Archive for safekeeping - some of it being cellulose nitrate film, which can be combustible. Some of these films have been transferred to videotape; this process should continue so that we have a copy of each film in the Library. These are the most historically significant items since they include films made in the 1920s of Friends' work overseas, including rare footage of the Russian famine of 1921-1923. Some later 16 mm cellulose acetate film copies of the early films are held in the collection.

A small number of 8mm and 16mm films from the late 1940s to the 1960s are held, along with videotapes; these are mostly material made for outreach purposes by central departments. We have some Betacam professional master tapes as well as video home system (VHS) tapes. More recent master tapes have been provided in digital

tape format (DigiBeta). We also have some commercial tapes, which are not our copyright (see 5.2.below).

Videotape is rapidly becoming an obsolete format, and new material is being issued in digital videodisk (DVD) format. We also receive DVDs made either by overseas Quakers or by TV production companies using our material, i.e. still images, archive film or manuscripts.

5. Acquisition

5.1. Acquiring the picture

Most material either arrives as an individual donation or is deposited as archival by a central BYM department. Two copies of every poster issued by departments are now received in the Library. Photographs made by departments of their own work are deposited irregularly, sometimes at the same time as paper archives. We also receive videotapes or DVDs in return for the use of our images by TV companies.

A small number of purchases of original artwork have been made in the past few years – these have tended to fill a perceived gap in the collection, e.g. the need for pictures of meetings for worship.

5.2. Acquiring copyright

It is important to clarify ownership in the copyright in the image as well as the object itself, since this will dictate how we can use the picture. Copyright in a photograph, painting, film etc. does not automatically pass with the picture itself. Copyright in images can be complex, particularly when the same image exists in several forms – painting, print from painting, photograph, online image etc. – since each may have a separate copyright. Our policy is to clarify copyright on receiving an acquisition; where it is not our copyright this should be clearly noted. It is preferred that we should obtain copyright where feasible since it gives us the freedom to use it or grant permission for its use as we wish.

6. Retention and disposal

The general policy is for permanent retention. Sometimes donations are accepted on the condition that we may dispose of unwanted or duplicated items before accessioning and cataloguing, in accordance with the Library's overall Collection Policy. Once the accession is recorded the item is retained permanently.

7. Storage

7.1. Unframed pictures

The bulk of the photographs, postcards and unframed prints and drawings are held in boxes of varying sizes, with the largest prints and posters stored in drawers in horizontal plan chests. These are held in stacks, and not at present on open access.

The individual items in the boxes are being transferred gradually into inert polyester sleeves, as recommended by conservators. These are transparent, and will make it easier for researchers to handle them without risk of damage. Ideally hinged Solander boxes for ease of use by readers should replace the largest boxes containing prints and drawings.

Some photograph collections were already fixed into albums when donated. This includes some finely bound albums of 19th century photographs of Quaker family portraits, in decorative leather bindings; and many albums of Friends work overseas, from 1916 onwards, which are generally stuck into photo albums of the standard shop-bought variety. The policy is to retain these in the albums, since lifting the individual prints from paper without damaging them is a task requiring professional conservation skills. The photo album is catalogued as a single entity, and held on shelves. Where the binding or boards are damaged, or pages loose, the album is treated in the same way as we would treat a printed book or bound manuscript in the similar circumstances, i.e. tied with tape to prevent further damage.

Both 35mm and glass lantern slides are held in hanging files in cabinets in the strong room. For preservation reasons, it is hoped to transfer the glass slides from this housing, scanning them first to produce a digital image and so cut down on the handling of the fragile material.

Negatives of items and pictures in our collection, both glass plate and film, are held in the strong rooms, and are handled as little as possible. Some of the collections we have received as donations include negatives along with the positive prints; these have been retained together in the stacks.

7.2. Framed pictures.

Apart from a few pictures displayed in the Reading Room, the framed picture collection is scattered in a number of stores and mostly kept stacked, which is not ideal for long-term preservation. We hope to hang more paintings when possible, since larger pictures if not hung need supportive racks. We do have some prints and watercolours hung in the Recording Clerk's Committee Room. However, hanging them outside the Library raises questions of security.

7.3. Moving pictures

Apart from the material now deposited with the National Film Archive (see 4.5 above), the films, videos and DVDs are kept on shelves in the stacks.

The films are a mixture of pre-1960 cellulose acetate safety film and later polyester film, so danger from decay is less acute than with the early nitrate film. However, the acetate film should ideally be held in much colder conditions than our stacks, preferably refrigerated.

At present the number of films/videos is fairly limited since we are not actively collecting, but it seems likely that the number of DVDs will increase by the addition of material from central departments and by TV companies in return for the use of material from the Library collections.

8. Access to the collection

8.1. Unframed pictures

There is a subject catalogue to photographic negatives accessible to researchers in the Reading Room. This includes negatives made of material from books or manuscripts and also some items that are not in our collection, but were lent to us for photography. This is usually the reader's first introduction to the Picture Collection. Otherwise, access to the collection is primarily by finding aids held in Library stacks, which therefore have to be consulted by staff on behalf of the reader. In most cases where the negative exists a copy print is kept for reference in a separate sequence of boxes organised by broad subject heading for ease of browsing. These are brought up from the stacks to the Reading Room on request.

There is also an older card catalogue that contains unique and very useful references to pictures kept in the manuscripts collection or in books.

More recent photographs from the departmental archives – particularly those made by QPSW workers overseas and by QCD at home are now being taken as digital images from the outset. The images to be retained are then saved on to a CD and a thumbnail picture is retained on a photo management system called Fotostation. This is likely to improve archival storage in the long term, since the creators are forced to decide at an early stage which images to keep – instead of saving up large quantities of prints which eventually are transferred to the Library with inadequate information about the contents or even when or where they were taken. The Library is also using the Fotostation

system to save keeping too many digital images permanently on the network.

8.2 Framed pictures

The framed pictures, both originals and prints, are all catalogued in a Microsoft WORD file, and have been photographed. Some entries are more detailed than others and details such as measurements and type of frame are being added gradually. This is not as yet available to readers in any format. Special arrangements have to be made for researchers to view original paintings - with the exception of those in the Reading Room - but most are happy to see a photograph of the painting.

Hanging more pictures would allow more people to look at them. We have considered lending pictures to meetings, but many meeting houses have limited security and insurance cover, and there does not seem to be much demand for a loan service at present.

We will consider lending pictures for display to other organisations that have good facilities and security, and are prepared to insure the item. For example, a portrait in oils of Richard Reynolds (1735-1816) by W.A.Hobday has been on long-term loan to the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust since 1979. It was taken off display recently and is securely stored at Coalbrookdale, and may form part of the new exhibition planned for the Museum of Iron. The Museum has recently re-insured the painting to our valuation.

8.3 Moving pictures

We no longer have the facilities at Friends House to show the 8mm and 16mm films in the collection, unless or until we can transfer them to digital format. It is possible that the remaining originals might be of interest to the National Film Archive.

We have a video and DVD player in the Library but have to borrow a TV from Hospitality to use it. We also have to book a room elsewhere in Friends House, since it cannot be used in the Reading Room without disturbing others. This makes it difficult to offer access to researchers except by special arrangement. A separate viewing room or cubicle would make access more possible.

A volunteer has recently listed the films, videotapes and DVDs in Microsoft EXCEL files, but there is no catalogue otherwise.

9. The future of the collection

The collection is not used as much as it might be if it were easier for readers to find their own images by browsing, whether online or

through reference prints. We have acquired a system for “watermarking” electronic images – this enables us to e-mail images to an enquirer for them to select for ordering, without providing them with a free usable image. We hope to develop this service further and provide access via the website to a selection of pictures from the collection.

The collection is likely to grow mostly in its archival function, i.e. preserving photographs of Quaker work. Growth in other areas is likely to be fairly slow and our concentration should be on improving the storage, cataloguing and preservation of the existing collections, and seeking ways to make the collection more accessible to researchers. There is scope for promoting the collection to a wider audience and realising more of its potential.