



Royal College of Physicians of Ireland partners with Preservica to protect important digital collections



About the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland

The Royal College of Physicians of Ireland (RCPI) was founded in 1654 by Dr John Stearne and has a long and rich history that is protected for present and future generations by RCPI's Heritage Centre. Their collections document RCPI's corporate history as well as the experiences of medical practitioners, historians, and patients. Various hospitals, medical and public health organisations have donated their records to the Heritage Centre, providing a fuller picture of medical education and practices in Ireland spanning more than 350 years. RCPI's Heritage Centre is an active archive and continues to collect current and historical records about medicine and medical care from the community.

The Challenge

As the only accredited medical museum in Ireland, RCPI's Heritage Centre needed a solution to protect internationally important digitised and born-digital content relating to the history of medicine and medical education in the country. This includes an initiative to create a new COVID-19 collection.

"Researchers expect to be able to access collections online at a greater rate, but it is essential we do this in a way that ensures the digital collections are available and preserved for the long-term," said Harriet Wheelock, Keeper of Collections, Royal College of Physicians of Ireland. "The College must develop our online collections and ensure they are actively digitally preserved and easily accessible for researchers."

The Heritage Centre's collections are varied, and include items such as:

- Our 1692 Royal Charter, diaries, letters, notebooks and casebooks of medical practitioners and students
- Illustrations of diseases and anatomy
- Photographs of doctors and hospital staff
- Medical education and teaching materials
- Oral history interviews carried out with clinicians
- and more...

While not all of RCPI's collections are currently available in a digital format, the staff caring for these materials have ambitions to grow their digital collections over the coming years. This will not only help to protect the collections for prosperity, but it will also expand access to these invaluable collections for researchers across a much broader geographic area and outside of the Heritage Centre's traditional working hours.

Some of the key criteria for RCPI's digital collections platform included:

- The flexibility and capability to scale as more content is digitised and as more born-digital content is added to the Heritage Centre's digital collections
- A secure and accessible cloud solution that can provide broader access
- Offer open APIs to integrate with their online archive and object catalogue CALM
- Compliance with OAIS ISO standards

The Solution

After an extensive search, in 2022, RCPI's Heritage Centre selected Preservica's SaaS solution to support their growing digital collections program. This proactive approach ensures that changes in technology do not erase RCPI's past.

"We are proud that Preservica has been chosen to safeguard these internationally important digital collections for future generations," said Mike Quinn, CEO, Preservica. "We welcome the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland to the growing community of academic institutions across Ireland and the world that are choosing Preservica as their trusted long-term partner for digital preservation."

Preservica's archiving software for academic institutions uniquely uses Active Digital Preservation to automatically ensure digital content remains accessible and readable over decades – no matter what file format it was created in. The software also includes a customisable online discovery portal for showcasing digital collections and providing access for researchers, students and the public.

Preservica's solution for the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland is cloud-hosted on AWS, a key Preservica partner. Preservica has achieved the AWS Education Competency, a designation issued by AWS for partners that have delivered proven customer success providing specialised solutions that align AWS architectural best practices to enhance the academic experience of teachers and learners and improve the operational needs of information managers and administrators.

The Future

RCPI's Heritage Centre continues to digitise its invaluable collections and plans to add new content to their Preservica platform over time. Key collections that researchers can expect to see in the future include:

- The diaries of Dr Kathleen Lynn
- Medical instrument collections
- RCPI's minute books dating back to 1692

To learn more about the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland and the Heritage Centre, visit [RCPI Heritage Centre > Collections](#). To see the newly launched digital collections, hosted on Preservica & AWS, visit [RCPI Digital Heritage Collections \(preservica.com\)](#). To learn more about Preservica and our partnership with AWS, visit [Preservica | Secure Digital Preservation, Archiving & Storage Software](#).