

# **Worcestershire Archive Service**

## **Acquisition and Collection Policy**

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## 1.0 Aim

The aim of this policy is to define the basis on which the Worcestershire Archive Service acquires or disposes of archives and records.

## 2.0 Repository and governing body

This policy statement relates to Worcestershire Archives and Archaeology service, The Hive, Sawmill Walk, The Butts, Worcester, WR1 3PB.

Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service is part of Worcestershire County Council's Adult and Community Services Directorate.

## 3.0 Statutory obligations

Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service will seek to abide by all relevant legislation including:

- Public Records Acts 1958, 1967
- Manorial Documents Rules 1959 and 1967
- Tithe Apportionment Rules 1960 and 1963
- Local Government (Records) Act 1962
- Local Government Act 1972
- Parochial Registers and Records Measure 1978, amended 1992
- Local Government (Access to Information Act) 1985
- Data Protection Act 1998
- Freedom of Information Act 2000

## 4.0 External recognition

Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service is:

The authorised archive service for the custody of the official records of Worcestershire County Council and its predecessor authorities under the Local Government Act 1972

An approved place of deposit under the Public Records Acts 1958 and 1967 for a number of classes of central government records held locally (public records)

such as those of Quarter Sessions, magistrates courts, coroners, county courts, health authorities.

Recognised by the Master of the Rolls as a repository for manorial and tithe records under the Law of Property Act 1922 and the Tithe Act 1936.

Designated by the Bishop of Worcester as the Diocesan Record Office under the Parochial Registers and Records Measure 1978 as amended by the Church of England (Miscellaneous Provisions) Measure 1992

Empowered to acquire archives by deposit, gift or purchase and to preserve and make them available under the Local Government (Records) Act 1962

## 5.0 Standards

Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service has adopted the following standards:

The National Archives Standard for Records Repositories 2004

National Standard for Access to Archives 2003

BS 5454:2000 Recommendations for the storage and exhibition of archival documents

General International Standard of Archival Description (ISAD(G)) 2000

## 6.0 Scope of acquisition and collection policy

Worcestershire Archive Service seeks to identify, collect and preserve the documentary heritage of Worcestershire and make it available for use both now and in the future and to encourage the broadest public access to archives

Worcestershire Archive Service will seek to ensure its collections reflect all aspects of Worcestershire's communities and their activities, past and present and will collect records from whatever source which can contribute to a better understanding of the history and development of the County.

Archives are accepted in a variety of formats and may include handwritten or typescript primary sources, maps, plans, designs, drawings, photographs, printed material, audio-visual or electronic media of any date.

Records collected will include:

- Records of the County Council and its predecessor bodies
- Records of other local authorities and their predecessors and statutory bodies operating within the County
- Local public records held under the Public Records Acts
- Ecclesiastical records the diocese of Worcester
- Records of regional bodies which have their headquarters within the County except where provision has already been made with another repository
- All types of record-creating bodies within Worcestershire such as Faith groups other than the Church of England, clubs, societies and associations, businesses, families, including landed estates and individuals

A senior archivist or any Archive Service Management Team member may exercise judgement on the informational and historical significance of collections offered to Worcestershire Archive Service which exceptionally do not fall within the scope of this policy.

Worcestershire Archive Service will collect documents relating to both the historic and modern administrative county of Worcestershire. This may include documents relating to places outside the county if there are exceptional circumstances or ethical reasons for keeping a collection together but Worcestershire Archive Service will not normally accept the deposit of records from areas outside its current administrative boundaries.

Film and video material will be accepted though this may be lodged in a repository with specialist facilities such as the Media Archive for Central England (MACE) if this is judged to be in the interests of the records. Where this occurs access copies will be obtained for use at Worcestershire Archive Service.

Only records which are judged to be of sufficient quality for permanent preservation will be accepted.

Only records that will be open for public access after processing by Worcestershire Archive Service (including listing and essential conservation work) or after a fixed period of time agreed in consultation with the owner or depositor will be accepted.

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The principal of the integrity of the archive will be respected and the division or dispersal of collections will be avoided.

Copies of archive material may be acquired where the owner does not wish to part with the original records.

Worcestershire Archive Service reserves the right to adopt preservation policies including migration to ensure the readability and long term preservation of the information contained in electronic media.

## 7.0 Limitations

Worcestershire Archive Service will not normally accept:

- Potentially hazardous material such as cellulose nitrate film or infested material that would pose a risk to the repository or other collections.
- Archives damaged beyond repair, unless the continuing historic value is judged to be significant.
- Archives that are subject to unreasonable restrictions on public use.
- Records of a national rather than local remit
- Records of a particularly specialist nature requiring skills or equipment beyond our resources to preserve, exploit or interpret or for which there is a more suitable repository
- Records which would by virtue of their format, content or provenance be more appropriately housed in another repository
- Records of a low informational value or which do not contribute to an understanding of the aims and objectives of the creating body or individual.
- Records where there is concern over legal ownership.
- Published material except where it forms an integral part of an archive, contains significant manuscript annotation or is of value as a research aid.
- Material which does not relate to Worcestershire unless that material is integral to a collection or dividing the collection would result in loss of archival value

- Artefacts, three-dimensional objects and works of art unless there is a special relationship between an artefact and the associated archives.
- Hard copy of newspapers unless they are deposited as part of a wider collection.
- Frames, tin trunks, deed chests and other containers which will be disposed of by Worcestershire Archive Service or returned to the donor.
- Records not judged to be of permanent historical value.

Staff can offer advice on suitable alternative places of deposit if Worcestershire Archive Service is not appropriate.

## 8.0 Cooperation with other repositories

Worcestershire Archive Service will work closely with other archive authorities to ensure that all records are placed in the most appropriate home and to avoid competition, conflict and duplication of effort, but will nevertheless assert its primacy in discussion with the Archives sector where it considers it has an overriding claim.

Worcestershire Archive Service will inevitably hold material relating to other areas and material relating to Worcestershire will be held by other collecting bodies but will seek to exchange lists as appropriate.

In the case of collections relating to areas on or near the borders of Worcestershire Archive Service's area staff will consult individual or local preference, but without prejudice to the appropriateness of the repository and the principles of archival integrity.

## 9.0 Methods of acquisition

Worcestershire Archive Service will acquire archives by transfer, deposit, gift, bequest or purchase. Gifts will be preferred unless a depositor has an ongoing legal need to retain title.

Records will be accepted by transfer from another repository if Worcestershire Archive Service is deemed the more appropriate repository.

Records may occasionally be purchased from reputable dealers and auctioneers, organisations or individuals who have legal title to those records or are acting on behalf of those who hold lawful title.

Worcestershire Archive Service will issue receipts signed by office staff and the depositor for all the archives. Worcestershire Archive Service will preserve all documentation relating to each acquisition. These records will form the legal basis for evidence of title.

To justify the Council's expenditure in cataloguing and conserving records collections should normally remain in Worcestershire Archive Service for at least 20 years or a charge may be incurred to cover the costs incurred.

## **10.0 Deaccessioning, disposal and transfer**

Records are acquired with the intention that they shall be preserved permanently but Worcestershire Archive Service reserves the right to retrospectively review its holdings against relevant selection procedures and dispose of any archives not deemed to be worthy of permanent preservation at the time of deposit or later in the acquisition process. Such material may be returned to the depositor, transferred elsewhere or destroyed confidentially.

It may be appropriate from time to time, where a collection has been accepted on the basis of its being a particular local example of the records generated by an activity, to reassess its retention should a similar, but better quality, example become available, or where a similar collection is offered as a gift where the existing collection is held as a loan.

Worcestershire Archive Service accepts the principle that there should be a strong presumption against the disposal by sale of any documents in their ownership.

Worcestershire Archive Service aims to maintain the archival integrity of collections. Where it is considered appropriate to split a collection and transfer part to another repository permission of the depositor will be sought.

Worcestershire Archive Service will transfer archives to a more suitable repository if it is felt that the documents and the users of those documents would benefit from their relocation.

## 11.0 Collection development

There is scope for developing the collection policy in the future as priorities and resources allow. Worcestershire Archive Service will seek to add further collections to reflect all aspects of life in the area it serves, aiming to cover all parts of the county's past and present and as wide a range of institutions and subjects as possible.

Priority in acquiring records will be given to archives at risk of loss, destruction or damage and record collections which may be underrepresented in the Service's holdings (see appendix - for strengths and weaknesses).

Worcestershire Archive Service will seek to review the strengths and weakness of its present holdings to fill gaps.

Worcestershire Archive Service will seek to implement a carefully managed programme of deaccessioning/ reappraisal should material be identified which is no longer deemed worthy of permanent preservation and to develop a series of more focussed selection/retention schedules of major classes of archives in order to establish stricter and more uniform criteria for selection.

Worcestershire Archive Service will seek to undertake proactive survey work as defined annually within the Service's Unit Business Plan.

## 12.0 Access

Archive collections will be catalogued as part of Worcestershire Archive Service's cataloguing programme to provide public access. Fixed term restrictions may be placed on public access to individually deposited records by specific agreement between the depositor and Worcestershire Archive Service but collections are only accepted on the basis that they will become accessible to the public in due course.

The terms of the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000 will be observed in providing access to records.

## 13.0 Date of policy

This policy was revised and updated in June 2012 to reflect organisational changes within the Service. The policy is unchanged since it was approved by Worcestershire Record Office's Management Team on 20 October 2010.

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The policy will be reviewed in 2018 or sooner if legislative or administrative changes dictate.

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## APPENDIX (as at July 2010)

### Areas of strength

Perceived strengths in the existing collections are:

- Quarter Sessions records
- Magistrates' Courts records
- Local Authority (County and District Councils) records
- Town and parish council records
- Records of former Boroughs
- Ecclesiastical parish records
- Diocesan records
- Poor Law records
- Nonconformist churches, particularly Methodist and Society of Friends, records
- Family and estate records
- Solicitors' records
- Photographs of the county
- Oral history records
- Hospital and mental health records, including nursing and practice records
- Political organisations' records
- Police records
- Coroner's records (late 20<sup>th</sup> cent. onwards)
- Personal journals and diaries

### Areas of weakness

Perceived weaknesses in the county-wide coverage include:

- Business archives of many significant local trades and industries
- Charities
- Voluntary Sector organisations
- School log books
- Trades Union records
- Many less main stream Non-conformist churches
- Minority ethnic and religious bodies (especially non-Christian)
- Agricultural and farming records
- Records of sporting clubs and societies
- Military records (personal and individual)
- Records of artistic and cultural organisations and individuals
- Architectural records
- Petty Sessional records
- Personal and family papers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century

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Worcestershire Record Office will seek to address these perceived weaknesses by making them known as widely as possible through outreach activities, through planned survey work and by direct approach to potential depositors/donors.

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