
Worcestershire Archive Service

Collections Information Policy 2013-2018

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1.0 Introduction

Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service's (WAAS) priority is to ensure the proper management of Worcestershire's heritage for current and future generations. We protect, preserve, manage, record, interpret, share and promote the history and historic environment of Worcestershire. We help the modern county of Worcestershire to achieve its priorities as identified in the Corporate Plan, especially sustainable development, a strong economy, better education and skills and independent healthy living. We are developing a sustainable model for the continuance and growth of the Archive and Archaeology Service in the current financial climate.

2.0 Aims

As part of Worcestershire Archive Service's responsibility for preserving, managing, interpreting and sharing the historic record of Worcestershire, it must ensure that adequate and appropriate information about the archival collections in its care is collected, recorded and made available. The Archive Service aims to make collections as discoverable and accessible as possible, by transmitting collections information to our stakeholders using a variety of methods, including electronically through an online catalogue and finding aids.

This Policy defines the information that Worcestershire Archives will gather and provide about archival collections. It also outlines the history of collections information and cataloguing with the Service, and describes the current cataloguing systems and professional standards used. The Policy is supported by a *Collections Information Plan*, which outlines the objectives through which we will achieve the aims of this policy.

Worcestershire Archives acknowledge that over the past several decades it has accumulated a substantial backlog of uncatalogued collections, a large proportion of which are completely unlisted. Cataloguing backlogs represent a significant barrier to access, with the result that stakeholders may be unaware of the existence of relevant collections and/or may experience difficulties locating relevant information within an unprocessed collection. There are also implications for the Service's ability to comply with Freedom of Information and Data Protection legislation, and more generally means that depositors are not being provided with the best possible service. This Policy outlines how this state of affairs has arisen and states the Service's intention to reduce this backlog, while the accompanying *Collections Information Plan* lays out the specific steps necessary to achieve this aim.

Worcestershire Archives will ensure that the information gathered and provided about collections enables it to fulfil its responsibilities under Freedom of Information and Data Protection legislation. WAS will prioritise collections of Public Records and local authority records in preparation for the UK government's transition to the 20-year rule.

Worcestershire Archives will prioritise the cataloguing of previously-identified and emerging collections of particular heritage significance, and align its cataloguing priorities to the acquisition priorities identified in the *Collection Development Plan*. See the Appendix to the *Collections Information Plan*.

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Worcestershire Archives will take steps to record the information required to ensure digital materials are preserved and can be retrieved and used. A separate *Digital Preservation and Digitisation Strategy* covers these aspects in detail.

Worcestershire Archives will endeavour to incorporate feedback from users into its cataloguing plans.

Worcestershire Archives will continue to ensure that all Collections Information procedures and activities are sustainably resourced, and aims to review and streamline all of its Collections Information procedures in order to ensure that they are necessary and as efficient as possible. See also the *Collections Information Plan*.

It is intended that the Policy and Plan function as live, working documents which will be reviewed regularly.

3.0 Collections Information

Worcestershire Archives capture information about collections at various points during the 'life' of a collection, from the point of deposit through to cataloguing and subsequently.

This Policy covers information gathered:

- at point of deposit and accessioning
- during cataloguing (including accruals) and indexing
- through location and movement control
- about demand, usage and disposal
- about physical condition, preservation and conservation activities

This information is recorded and maintained in a variety of places and formats. These include but are not limited to:

- Accessions Register (part paper, part electronic)
- Accession forms
- Backlog List
- CALM Collections Management Software
- CALM Control Spreadsheet, which records ownership and monitors the progress of each collection during accessioning and cataloguing
- Correspondence files (partly paper, partly electronic) for our depositors, which may be used to augment the information found in accessions and catalogue records.
- Other finding aids, including handlists and specific indexes, many of which have been and continue to be made available on the Service's website
- Marking and labelling of objects
- Locations spreadsheet
- Document request slips
- Disposals register

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4.0 Point of Deposit and Accessioning

In the first few decades of the Service's history, deposits were not allocated a unique accession number and depositors not sent a receipt until the collection was catalogued. After a number of incidents of deposits on loan being withdrawn after resources had been used on cataloguing and preserving the records, it was felt necessary to ensure that clear written agreements regarding the terms of deposit were in place.

The Service has maintained an Accession Register, a *Terms of Deposit Policy* and accession forms establishing and recording the legal status of collections, including ownership, access legislation and intellectual property rights, since 1991. One copy of the accession form is returned to the depositor as a receipt, and another is retained permanently by the Service, along with all other documentation, as evidence of title.

The current accession form captures a number of other details, including:

- Contact details of the depositor
- Brief description of items being donated/deposited, including extent and covering dates
- Custodial/Administrative history
- Any depositor-imposed restrictions or closure periods
- Authority to dispose

Depositors are encouraged to prepare box/contents lists but are not required to do so. Copies of any lists provided are retained and where possible, entered into CALM.

The accession form does not currently cover specific requirements for digital material, but the Service aims to adapt its accessioning documentation and procedures appropriately (see *Collections Information Plan*). In the meantime, depositors of digital material are asked either verbally or in writing to provide metadata if possible and confirm that they are happy for their deposit to be copied and migrated for preservation purposes.

All accessions information is entered into CALM.

Worcestershire Archives participates in The National Archives' annual Accessions to Repositories Survey to enable up-to-date information to appear on the National Register of Archives. See the *Collections Development Plan* for details of how these returns are analysed to evaluate collecting priorities.

5.0 Cataloguing (including Accruals) and Indexing

All cataloguing since 2004 has been done using CALM software, supported by an in-house General Manual for Cataloguing in CALM. The Service uses the following standards:

- The mandatory elements of International Council on Archives, General International Standard of Archival Description [ISAD(G)]

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- International Council on Archives, International Standard Archival Authority for Corporate Bodies, Persons and Families [ISAAR(CPF)]
- National Council on Archives, Rules for the Construction of Personal, Place and Corporate Names [NCA Rules].

Prior to the adoption of these standards, the original method of cataloguing was based on an in-house standard template using a set of agreed precedents to ensure cataloguers covered the essential information required. Some very large collections had only rough summary lists. The then County Archivist believed that a system of initial inventorying in lesser detail made material available more quickly. The intention was to revisit the collections later and produce detailed catalogues. The sheer weight of collections coming in, especially at the time of various local government reorganisations, meant this never happened.

5.1 Accruals

Accruals to existing collections are catalogued separately, but linked to previous deposits from the same source through their finding numbers, hierarchical arrangement in CALM and cross-referencing within the catalogue entries.

A finite number of collections for which we receive regular accruals are treated as *continuations*, i.e. records which were accessioned when first deposited and to which subsequent records accrued without being separately accessioned. A handlist of these collections is available.

5.2 Cataloguing Prioritisation and User Demand

Recently an in-house prioritisation scheme was introduced to identify priorities within uncatalogued material to target cataloguing time at selected collections and provide a rationale for decisions. Collections are scored according to their ownership status, Freedom of Information and Data Protection considerations, anticipated demand and potential usage, physical condition, size and complexity. The scoring matrices for each collection are retained.

Worcestershire Archives aims to become more flexible and responsive to user demand in its cataloguing programme. In 2012 a system of recording requests to view items on the backlog was adopted. The Service intends to incorporate this information into our process for prioritising collections for cataloguing (see *Collections Information Plan*).

5.3 Staff Involvement in Cataloguing

Restructuring of staff in January 2012 offered the opportunity to renew commitment to collections management, and cataloguing in particular. For the first time the core Cataloguing Team was increased and all members of the Archive Team now have time dedicated to collections work, on a rota basis.

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Cataloguing activity is monitored by archivists in the Cataloguing Team, who form an editorial team for catalogues. Members of staff maintain logs detailing the collection being worked on, the amount of work done and how much time they have spent on it. The Service maintains a spreadsheet following the progress of each accession, from when it is entered into the CALM accessions database, to when it is fully catalogued.

In order to develop the programme of staff cataloguing, training for staff involved with cataloguing has been and will continue to be delivered. Worcestershire Archives also aims to develop flexible cataloguing targets and streamline the processes of editing and printing catalogues (see *Collections Information Plan*).

5.4 Indexing (including Authority Indexing)

Prior to cataloguing in CALM, collections were indexed manually, using a hand-written slip index system. Originally the slip index was used predominantly by members of staff, who would use it to provide reference services, but it eventually was made available to members of the public to search themselves. Deposits catalogued in CALM are not indexed in this way, as the system automatically indexes terms entered into it and allows users to search by key-word.

The Worcestershire Archive manual for cataloguing in CALM covers authority indexing, but this has been used only sporadically, and primarily for collections of particular heritage significance. The Archive Service aims to implement more consistent use of authority indexing, and develop training in the same. See also the *Collections Information Plan*.

5.5 Online Catalogue and Finding Aids

The Service has had a CalmView catalogue available via its website since 2011. This version of the catalogue currently only contains a proportion of the holdings catalogued in CALM and generally speaking does not include our catalogues available on A2A. The Archive Service will aim to present brief collection level descriptions of all of our holdings online.

As part of this, in 2004 the Service began the process of retro-converting its old paper-based catalogues to CALM. Alongside this, information about long-standing depositors (including ownership and intellectual property rights) was input into CALM, and where possible updated and corrected. This work was postponed in order to prepare for the move to The Hive, and will be reviewed and re-launched in 2014 (see *Collections Information Plan*).

The Archives maintain a variety of handlists and indexes to specific collections both in-branch and on its website. These are continually updated and improved. The Service intends to publish more of these online as they become available. The majority of the Service's handlists and indexes are developed through the work of volunteers and members of staff based in the User Services Team. See also the *Audience Development Plan*.

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6.0 Restrictions and Closure Periods

Worcestershire Archive collections include records subject to certain access restrictions or periods during which the records are closed. These may be determined by Data Protection legislation, advice and guidance from The National Archives and the Information Commissioner's Office, or imposed by the depositor. Information Access Officers at the County Council's Corporate Information Management Unit also offer guidance and advice. The Service has maintained a list of restrictions and closure periods since 2004 for use by reference and cataloguing staff. It is the Service's policy to mark catalogue entries, the locations spreadsheet, and archival packaging with these restrictions.

It is Worcestershire Archive's policy to make users aware of restrictions and their rationale. Archive staff follow documented procedures when advising users of the steps necessary to gain access to particular classes of restricted records. See also the *Visitor's Guide*, *General Regulations and Searchroom Rules* and *Access to Personal Information Statement*.

7.0 Physical Condition, Preservation and Conservation

The physical condition of collections is initially assessed at the point of deposit and during accessioning. This information is entered into CALM and taken into account when the collection is prioritised for cataloguing.

Preservation and conservation activities undertaken on archival material are recorded in CALM. See also the *Preservation and Conservation Policy*.

8.0 Locations and Movement Control, including Loans

Worcestershire Archives aim to maintain up to date information on the locations of collections in its care. It uses a combination of paper document requisition slips containing the details of the documents and the user, a spreadsheet documenting the shelf location of each parcel, CALM software, and clear marking and labelling on the objects themselves. As can be seen in our Access policies, researchers' details are maintained through the CARN system, strict searchroom rules apply and items produced for researchers are weighed before and after use.

The Archive Service will ensure that information about mislaid or withdrawn records is recorded in all copies of catalogues and that 'dummy cards' are placed on shelves in the place of missing records.

Depositors wishing to remove archival material temporarily, for example for use in exhibitions, must fill in a designated document requisition form. They are to be supplied with information about the correct handling and exhibition of documents, in accordance

with the *Preservation and Conservation Policy and Plan*. A return date is negotiated, and reminders will be sent to parties in possession of unreturned archival material.

Separate procedures, including timed retrieval for charging purposes where appropriate, cover certain classes of documents, including adoption files, Magistrates Court and Coroners records.

9.0 Disposals and Withdrawals

At the point of deposit, Worcestershire Archives captures depositors' permissions to destroy or transfer to another repository any material that we are unable to keep. These permissions are reconfirmed prior to disposal. The Archive Service maintains a register of all disposal decisions, including their rationale.

The Archive Service makes use of retention and disposal schedules where appropriate, both for its own disposal decisions and when advising depositors about records recommended for permanent preservation. These schedules include those produced by the County Council, Archives and Records Association, Church of England, and other organisations. Worcestershire Archives have developed in-house retention guides for particular organisations and classes of records, and aims to produce additional guides in the future. The Archive Service also works closely with the Worcestershire County Council Corporate Information Management Unit regarding the preservation and cataloguing of Council records transferred to the Archive Service. See the *Acquisition and Collection Policy* and the *Collection Development Plan* for further information about disposal of archives.

Depositors are made aware at the point of deposit that if a collection on loan is withdrawn before twenty years have elapsed, a charge may be made to cover the Council's expenditure on cataloguing, preserving and conserving the records.

10.0 Funding for Cataloguing Activities

For a number of years, Worcestershire Archives has successfully applied for grants and funding in order to resource significant cataloguing projects. Prior to the move to The Hive, two major funded projects involving cataloguing (the WASP and Croome projects) enabled the Service to tackle large collections from the backlog, and we will continue to seek funding from a variety of sources for this purpose. Recently funding has been awarded to catalogue the Lyttelton Collection and to complete the Herefordshire and Worcestershire portions of the Manorial Documents Register (MDR).

This mode of resourcing cataloguing activity is likely to become increasingly significant as the Service adjusts to the changing financial climate.

This policy was written in July 2013 and will be reviewed in 2018 or sooner if circumstances dictate.

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