
Worcestershire Archive Service

Collections Information Policy 2019-2024

a partnership between

Contents

1.0 Introduction.....	3
2.0 Aims.....	3
3.0 Collections Information	4
4.0 Point of Deposit and Accessioning	4
5.0 Cataloguing (including Accruals) and Indexing.....	5
5.1 Accruals.....	6
5.2 Cataloguing Prioritisation and User Demand	6
5.3 Staff Involvement in Cataloguing	6
5.4 Indexing (including Authority Indexing)	6
5.5 Online Catalogue and Finding Aids	7
6.0 Restrictions and Closure Periods.....	7
7.0 Physical Condition, Preservation and Conservation	8
8.0 Locations and Movement Control, including Loans	8
9.0 Disposals and Withdrawals	8
10.0 Funding for Cataloguing Activities	9

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; Open for Business, Promoting Health and Well Being, Protecting the Environment, Supporting Children and Families. We are developing a sustainable model for the continuance and growth of the Archive and Archaeology Service in the current financial climate. This policy should be viewed in conjunction with our other policies and plans.

2.0 Aims

As part of Worcestershire Archive Service's (WAAS; the Service) 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. WAAS 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 WAAS 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.

WAAS acknowledges 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.

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

WAAS 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*.

a partnership between

WAAS will take steps to record the information required to ensure digital materials are preserved and can be retrieved and used.

WAAS 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.

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

3.0 Collections Information

WAAS captures 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

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.

a partnership between

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 WAAS, 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 WAAS aims to adapt its accessioning documentation and procedures appropriately. A digital asset register is used to record digital material and 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.

WAAS participates in The National Archives' annual Accessions to Repositories Survey to enable up-to-date information to appear on the National Register of Archives.

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)]
- 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

a partnership between

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 on a searchable spreadsheet.

WAAS 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.

5.3 Staff Involvement in Cataloguing

Archive assistants are involved in cataloguing where practical, particularly in regard to continuations. Cataloguing activity is monitored by archivists. Small or single items for cataloguing are identified at the point of accession and stored on a spreadsheet so that these can be processed quickly.

In order to develop the programme of staff cataloguing, training for staff involved with cataloguing, has been and will continue to be delivered.

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,

a partnership between

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 WAAS 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.

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.

As part of this, in 2004 WAAS 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 which was postponed in order to prepare for the move to The Hive, has since been re-launched.

WAAS maintains a variety of handlists and indexes to specific collections both on site and on its website. These are continually updated and improved. The Service intends to publish more of these on our new Explore the Past website as they become available. The majority of WAAS's handlists and indexes are developed through the work of volunteers and members of staff. WAAS is also increasingly importing work done by volunteers on spreadsheets into CALM in order to enhance collection level entries.

6.0 Restrictions and Closure Periods

WAAS's 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 WAAS's policy to mark catalogue entries, the locations spreadsheet, and archival packaging with these restrictions.

It is WAAS'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.

a partnership between

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.

8.0 Locations and Movement Control, including Loans

WAAS aims 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.

WAAS 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. The locations spreadsheet is also annotated accordingly.

Depositors wishing to remove archival material temporarily for example for use in exhibitions, must fill in a designated document requisition form, sign a withdrawal letter and concede to a condition report. Condition is reviewed on return of items. They are to be supplied with information about the correct handling and exhibition of documents, in accordance with the *Preservation and Conservation Policy*. 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, WAAS 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. WAAS 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. WAAS has developed in-house retention guides for particular organisations and classes of records and aims to produce additional guides in the future. WAAS 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.

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, WAS has successfully applied for grants and funding in order to resource significant cataloguing projects. More recently funding has been awarded from various bodies to catalogue collections including the Lyttelton Collection, West Mercia Police records, Worcestershire Mental Health records, other hospital and health records, AE Housman (poet), A. John Poole (artist) Stretton family, Freddie Charles (architect), St Mary's School and Arthur Henry Whinfield glass slides.

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

This policy was reviewed in September 2019 and will be reviewed again in April 2024 or sooner if circumstances dictate.