

## Archives and Local History Collections Policy

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1** This policy has been compiled and agreed by City of York Council ('the Authority') and has been adopted by Explore York Libraries and Archives Mutual Ltd ('the Contractor') on 1 April 2019. The use of 'we' and 'our' throughout the policy refers to Explore in their capacity as the Contractor.

The policy is to be updated by the Contractor and submitted to the Authority for approval every three years for the duration of the contract term.

**1.2 Scope of this policy**

This Collections Policy focuses on the long-term needs of the Collections. It will assist in long-term decision making and prioritising work in a range of circumstances, including:

- Providing access to the holdings which is balanced with their long-term preservation
- Day to day preservation work on the holdings by staff
- Annual conservation work which is outsourced
- Tasks undertaken by volunteers
- The submission of funding bids with a preservation aspect
- Improvements to physical or digital storage facilities
- The development of new accommodation
- Mitigating the risk of an event disastrous to the holdings (fire, flood, pest/mould infestation), and, exceptionally, in disaster recovery.

This policy is sub-divided into four parts, covering collections development, collections information, collections care and conservation and digital preservation.

#### Collections Development

This section sets out how we acquire and appraise archives and local history materials for preservation and public access, and procedures for the review of our existing collections to determine whether we should continue to hold them.

#### Collections information

This section defines the information we will gather and create about our collections, through the processes of acquisition, accession, appraisal and cataloguing, and the manner in which this information is made available.

#### Collections care and conservation

This section sets out our operational approach to collections care and conservation, and provides a framework to mitigate risks to the long-term preservation and accessibility of the archives and local history materials in our care. It outlines the principles that ensure that the collections are cared for and managed consistently and efficiently.

#### Digital preservation

This section outlines our role in the active preservation of born-digital archives.

### **1.3 Definitions**

Records are defined as structured information created or received in the course of activity by an individual, family, community or organisation and which are retained by that individual, family, community or organisation, or their successors, as evidence of those activities.

Archives are defined as records which are selected for permanent preservation because of the historical, legal/evidential, social or community value of the information that they contain.

Records and archives are defined by function not medium or format and can include, but are not limited to, manuscripts, typescripts, computer-generated documents, maps, plans, drawings, photographs, databases and other electronic records, sound recordings and any other formats containing information.

Published local history materials are defined as including, but not restricted to, books, pamphlets, journals, articles, grey literature, ephemera, micro-formats

and online content which have been acquired for reference use as information or as a cultural or community resource.

#### **1.4 Legislative context**

Explore abides by the requirements of relevant legislation, including:

- Law of Property Act, 1924
- Tithe Act, 1936
- Public Records Acts, 1958 and 1967
- Local Government (Records) Act, 1962
- Local Government Act, 1972
- Local Government (Access to Information) Act, 1985
- General Data Protection Regulation, 2018
- Freedom of Information Act, 2000

City of York Council has been designated by the Lord Chancellor as a Place of Deposit for local public records. At present these consist of records of the courts of Quarter and Petty Sessions, the Magistrates' court and the Coroner's court.

City of York Council holds manorial documents as designated by the Master of the Rolls and under the supervision of the Secretary of The National Archives: Historical Manuscripts Commission.

City of York Council does not exercise delegated powers under the Parochial Registers and Records Measure, 1978 (as amended 1993). The Borthwick Institute for Archives at The University of York exercises these powers for Church of England parishes within the Deanery of York in the Diocese of York.

Explore York Libraries and Archives Mutual Ltd ('Explore') is contracted to manage the archive and local history collections of City of York Council, including public records and manorial records, and all responsibilities under the above acts are devolved to Explore for the term of the contract.

## **2. Collections Development**

### **2.1 Statement of Intent**

Explore will select, acquire, preserve, and provide access to:

- i. Archives of the City of York Council, its predecessors in law, and of other authorities whose powers and duties have been transferred to the Council.
- ii. Local public records (as directed to us by The National Archives) and manorial documents (as designated by the Master of the Rolls and under the supervision of the Secretary of The National Archives: Historical Manuscript Commission).
- iii. Archives from public and private sources which document the history, culture and identity of the City of York's communities, organisations and inhabitants.
- iv. Published materials relating directly to the geography, environment, demography, culture, economy and history of the City of York and its inhabitants.
- v. Published materials which will assist users to understand the archive and local history collections by providing background or contextual information, or by interpreting their content.

This general statement of collecting policy is subject to and limited by the detailed criteria set out in Section 2.4.

## **2.2 Scope of collecting**

### **2.2.1 Geographic**

Explore will give the highest priority to collecting archives and published materials which relate directly and primarily to communities, organisations or individuals within the administrative boundaries of the City of York Council or former parts of the historic County Borough of York, including the Ainsty.

Explore will selectively collect published materials relating to the geography, environment, demography, culture, economy and history of Yorkshire and the north of England in order to provide contextualising information for the York-focused collections.

We will selectively collect published materials relating to other parts of the United Kingdom and the world but only where these provide substantial contextualising information for the York-focused collections.

### **2.2.2 Thematic**

We will give the highest priority to collecting a comprehensive archive documenting the decision-making processes and the most significant activities of the City of York Council and its predecessors in law.

We will collect archives from individuals, families, communities and organisations in both public and private sectors who have made a significant contribution to the city, its citizens or its neighbourhoods through active participation in the community, civic or business life of the city. These will include, but are not limited to, the archives of secular parish and town councils, businesses, clubs and societies, guilds, political parties, trade unions, pressure groups, local campaigns, families and individuals.

We will be proactive in collecting Archives and published materials that represent, as far as possible, a diverse spectrum of activities, cultures and viewpoints within the City of York. We will regularly review the collections in conjunction with our stakeholders, advisory group and community members to identify omissions and will take all practicable steps to address these gaps.

We will selectively collect published materials which provide substantial and relevant background and contextualising information on major themes in York's history and culture, subject to this material not being easily accessible to the public elsewhere in the city. Themes which may be collected include, but are not limited to, the military, railways, the confectionary industry, the tourism and leisure industry, archaeology and the built environment, and community activism.

### **2.2.3 Chronological**

We will collect Archives and published materials regardless of their date of creation or publication.

We will regularly review the printed materials collections to ensure that items held have not been superseded by more recent editions or

versions, but we will continue to hold earlier versions of printed materials if the earlier version continues to have historical or informational value.

#### **2.2.4 Format and media**

In principle we will collect material in any format or media but with the following caveats.

- i. Offers of films will normally be directed to an appropriate specialist film archive (generally the Yorkshire Film Archive) as a more suitable repository for both preservation of and access to the material.
- ii. Offers of cultural heritage objects or works of art will normally be directed to an appropriate museum or gallery (generally the York Museums Trust) unless the artefacts, objects or works of art have a significant information relationship with an archive or published material in our custody, and we can provide suitable conditions for preservation and public access.
- iii. Offers of archaeological deposits or artefacts will normally be directed to an appropriate museum (generally the York Archaeological Trust or York Museums Trust) unless the artefacts have a significant information relationship with an archive or published material in our custody, and we can provide suitable conditions for preservation and public access.

### **2.3 Collections Development Strategy**

As per section 2.2 above we review our Collections to ensure that we hold archives and published materials relating to diverse communities and life experiences in York past and present.

A collections gap analysis undertaken as part of the York: Gateway to History project (2013-2016) identified the following areas that are currently under-represented in our holdings:

- Local Businesses and trade organisations
- Health and wellbeing clubs, societies and organisations
- Diverse and minority communities.

Explore undertakes to pro-actively develop contacts and build relationships with records creators and custodians in these areas to ensure gaps are filled.

#### **2.4 Co-operation with other institutions**

Generally, the collecting of published materials will not conflict with the collecting remits of other institutions as published materials are normally preserved in multiple copies and locations.

Explore recognises the rights and collecting strengths of other professionally staffed archive repositories, both local and national, and will make every effort to avoid competition, conflict or duplication of effort. When acquiring or seeking to acquire archives, Explore will bear in mind the appropriateness of the service as a place for this custody, and will not acquire archives or unique published materials which clearly fall wholly or substantially within the declared collecting remit of another archive or local history service.

If and when we become aware (either at the point of offer or in retrospect) that archives or unique published materials fall wholly or substantially under the declared collecting policies of another archive or local history service we will take all practicable steps to co-operate with the other service to agree the most sustainable outcome for preserving the material and enabling public access to it.

As far as practicable we will apply the following principles to archives or unique published materials for which suitable alternative repositories already exist:

- i. We will not collect archives from national government bodies, unless they are directed to us by The National Archives under public records or manorial documents legislation.
- ii. We will not collect archives from religious organisations, institutions, communions or societies unless the archive also has a strong and



significant connection with our thematic collecting policy (section 2.2.2). In general, these materials will be directed to the Borthwick Institute for Archives at the University of York.

- iii. We will not collect archives relating to the NHS or its predecessors unless they relate to a public healthcare function of the City of York Council or its predecessors. In general, these materials will be directed to the Borthwick Institute for Archives at the University of York.
- iv. We will not collect the archives of national or international businesses or organisations unless there is no other suitable archive repository to which they can be directed.
- v. We will only collect archives of railway companies which directly relate to the City of York and which do not fall under the remit of The National Archives or the National Railway Museum.
- vi. We will not collect runs of journals and newspapers which are readily available for public access elsewhere in the City of York.

## **2.5 Acquisition**

Archives and published materials will be accepted into our custody either through transfer of title by gift (including bequest) to the City of York Council, or by purchase, or by transfer from City of York Council.

Archives and published material may exceptionally be accepted into our custody through deposit (i.e. on loan). All deposits will be for fixed renewable loan periods, terminable by either side at any time subject to an agreed notice period. From the approval date of this policy onwards archives and published material will not be accepted on indefinite deposit or 'permanent loan'.

The precise terms of acquisition or deposit will be negotiated by us with the seller, donor or depositor before any archives or published materials are accepted into our custody. All donors, sellers and depositors will be required to furnish satisfactory evidence that they have sufficient legal authority to enter into an agreement with us to transfer custody or ownership of the archives or published materials.



Many archives in our custody prior to the approval date of this policy were accepted on indefinite deposit or ‘permanent loan’. In those cases we will make all practicable efforts to contact the original depositor or their successors in law to negotiate conversion of the deposit into either an outright gift, or a time-limited loan. If, after all practicable efforts, it is not possible to trace or identify the original depositor or their successors within a period of twelve months then the material will be assumed to have been gifted to City of York Council.

An accessions register (or the equivalent in computerised form) will be kept to record essential information about the nature and circumstances of each acquisition. The information will include the date of acquisition, the name and address of the source, brief details of the items, the terms of deposit, rights information (both copyright and identifiable data subject rights) and collection and accession numbers which allow the items concerned and any related documentation to be traced.

Signed gift and deposit forms will be retained alongside the accessions register. Items which are loaned for exhibition or for the purposes of copying will be held securely and returned to their lender.

Notice of every new acquisition and of any restrictions on its access and use will be made public at the earliest opportunity, including through notification to The National Archives.

## **2.6 Selection and appraisal**

Explore collects or takes custody of archives and published material on behalf of City of York Council as per the terms of signed contract and service specification. Explore does not collect or take custody of any material on its own behalf.

By collecting or taking custody of archives and published materials Explore accepts a continuing obligation on behalf of the City of York Council to preserve this material and to give public access to it. This represents a significant long-term resource commitment by City of York Council. Appraisal of collections is important in our aim to hold records that reflect all aspects of life in York past and present, covering as many communities, individuals and organisations as possible. It is necessary to make the most effective use of our resources. It also

balances the interests of depositors and donors with the needs of researchers and the wider community.

We cannot automatically accept all offers of new material. All new offers will be subject to a selection process to appraise their long-term informational, historical, legal/evidential, social and community value against the resource implications and costs of acquisition.

Appraisal will be carried out in two stages. Offers of all new material will first be assessed against the collecting criteria set out in Section 2.2 above. Records are assessed according to their value for evidential, legal or business purposes as well as for being a resource for current and future research. Emphasis is placed on keeping primary records in a collection to avoid repetition of information. The contents of new accessions may also be reviewed with reference to existing collections to avoid duplication of sources.

Offers of archives and unique published materials will then be assessed by professionally-qualified staff against management criteria which will include, but are not limited to:

- i. The financial and opportunity costs of storage, conservation and public access.
- ii. The quality and quantity of information and evidence in the new material relative to the costs of acquisition and custodianship.
- iii. Whether the material requires specialist skills or equipment for its conservation, interpretation and public access which are beyond our resources to supply.
- iv. Whether the material duplicates other material already in the collections.
- v. Whether the material adds value by filling a gap in the existing collections.
- vi. Whether the material forms part of an existing collection held in another repository.
- vii. The length of any closure periods that will have to be applied before the material can be opened for public access.

- viii. The quality and robustness of the material's provenance and previous chain of custody (i.e. how well it can be authenticated).

Selection and appraisal discussions and decisions take place during bi-monthly collections meetings and are recorded in the minutes of these meetings.

Records may be appraised by staff at the point of acquisition, during the accessioning process or when they are being arranged and listed. Depositors and donors are also encouraged to check through records before bringing them in to remove multiple copies and unrelated items. Staff will provide depositors with guidance about what types of records they should be keeping.

## **2.7 Review and disposal**

We will carry out periodic reviews of the material in our custody to ensure that it continues to conform to the collecting and appraisal criteria set out in this policy.

Explore accepts the principle that there should be a strong presumption against the disposal by sale of any items in its ownership. We will aim to collect no more than two copies of any one special collections item. Donations of material already in stock will be retained if they form a significant part of a significant collection, or if they are substantially different to copies already held (for example if they contain handwritten annotations by a prolific former owner). Explore retains the right after consultation with the donor or depositor of duplicate special collections in an appropriate way.

Where material in our custody no longer conforms to this collecting policy and is owned by the City of York Council we will seek to find an alternative future for the material in the following order of preference:

- i. Transfer of title to another public cultural institution which will maintain free public access to the material;
- ii. Loan to another public cultural institution which will maintain free public access to the material;
- iii. Transfer of title to another custodian (public or private) who can offer a realistic proposal for the long-term preservation of the material with free public access;

- iv. Loan to another custodian (public or private) who can offer a realistic proposal for the long-term preservation of the material with free public access;
- v. Loan to another custodian (public or private) who can offer a realistic proposal for the long-term preservation of the material but not necessarily with free public access;
- vi. Transfer of title to another custodian (public or private) who can offer a realistic proposal for the long-term preservation of the material but not necessarily with free public access;
- vii. Offer back to the original donor or their successors in law;
- viii. Offer for sale;
- ix. Dispose by other means.

Where material in our custody no longer conforms to this collecting policy and is held by us on deposit or 'permanent loan' we will contact the original depositor or their successors in law and work with them to seek an alternative future for the material in the following order of preference:

- i. With the depositor's agreement transfer the deposit to another public archive or local history service, or other public cultural institution, which will maintain free public access to the material;
- ii. With the depositor's agreement transfer the deposit to another custodian (public or private) who can offer a realistic proposal for the long-term preservation of the material with free public access;
- iii. With the depositor's agreement transfer the deposit to another custodian (public or private) who can offer a realistic proposal for the long-term preservation of the material but not necessarily with free public access;
- iv. Terminate the deposit agreement and return the material to the original depositor.

A permanent record of the review process will be maintained in the minutes of Collections Meetings.

No archival records will be acquired or disposed of in contravention of the terms of any current legislation, and in particular the Public Records Acts 1958 and 1967 and the Manorial Documents Rules 1959.

## **2.8 Withdrawals**

Depositors can withdraw records temporarily for an agreed period if required, for example for use in an external exhibition. Advanced notice of this is strongly encouraged, and permission in writing from the depositor is required. Records on deposit can also be withdrawn permanently. The depositor may then be asked for reasonable costs for storage and any cataloguing or conservation work.

## **2.9 Access**

Subject to the requirements of information legislation such as the UK Data Protection Act 2018, Freedom of Information Act 2000 and Environmental Information Regulations 2004, all archives and published material in our custody will be available for public access either immediately or at the expiry of a specified period agreed with the depositor.

Explore's policy on access and use of archive and published materials will be set out in a separate Access Policy

# **3. Collections Information**

## **3.1 Statement of Intent**

We recognise that maintaining accurate and appropriate information about the records in our care is essential to promoting efficient collections management and to improve public access.

This section of the Collections Policy defines the information we will gather and create about our collections. It includes information about the acquisition, accession, appraisal and cataloguing of records, and also details how information relating to these processes will be made available.

## **3.2 Acquisitions**

Explore will only acquire records which fall within the terms of section 2 of this policy, outlined above.

It is essential to confirm the legal title of material being offered to us. Information on the provenance of material is required for establishing legal title and the status of the accession (loan, gift, transfer etc). It is also of paramount importance for the integrity of the information held within the records. We therefore record details about the depositor, from where the material was transferred, any intermediary involved in the transfer, date of transfer and the terms of deposit (loan, gift etc).

Accession and depositor data is only available to staff.

A number of collections (particularly smaller ones) are initially offered to us for an opinion or decision about whether they should be added to the archive. In these cases the owner of the materials will be issued with a Temporary Deposit form stating what was left with Explore and when. This will be followed up with a formal gift agreement once a decision has been made to take in the item(s) to the archive, otherwise the material will be returned to the owner. All decisions regarding temporary deposits will be made within six months of the date of receipt.

Signed hard copy gift agreements are issued to the depositor which record the date of transfer, the terms of deposit, brief details of the records, covering dates, copyright information, permission to select / sample etc. Signed copies are retained permanently in accession files along with any correspondence (see section 3.4 for more information). 'Terms of deposit' are also provided to depositors.

Maintaining contact with depositors and donors of early or small collections has been a difficult area for us, in common with similar archives services. Our formal agreements ask depositors and donors to inform us of changes in contact details and records ownership as part of their agreement with us. We also contact depositors and donors when cataloguing work is completed.

### **3.3 Transfers from City of York Council and Public Records bodies**

The City Archive is a designated place of deposit for the records of City of York Council under sections 224 and 226(5) of the Local Government Act 1972. This requires the council to make proper arrangements for any documents which

belong to them, or are in their custody, and applies to records which are still in active use, as well as to those which are now inactive.

The classes of records created by City of York Council and its departments which are identified as requiring permanent preservation are referred to the Archive Service by the Records Management Service when they reach the end of their retention period. Explore communicates with CYC to ensure that records selected for permanent preservation are transferred in good time, appropriately packaged, with adequate descriptive information and with guidance on their accessibility.

The City Archive is a place of deposit for local public records under the Public Records Act 1958 (as amended 1967). All public records which are transferred by creating authorities to the archive must be appropriately packaged so that they can be taken into storage by the place of deposit without undue delay. Both packaging and transfer are the responsibility of the creating authority.

The Archivist for Civic and Public Records keeps in regular touch with depositors of records governed by the Public Records Acts (for example Coroners, Magistrates Courts) to ensure the smooth transfer of additional records at appropriate times. This ensures that there is a clear process for issues such as; the timing and frequency of the transfer of records; preparation of records for transfer; methods of transfer which will be used and contact details and other communication arrangements.

### **3.4 Accessioning**

Recording accurate and appropriate information about the provenance of the Archives and Local History collections in our care is important to maintain the integrity of the collections and answer enquiries about them.

Each collection is given a unique accession number at the time of receipt and this is used to manage the records until they are catalogued. This number is also used on the agreement and receipt relating to the records.

Information about each accession is recorded in our accessions register on our CALM database, and in hard copy. Each electronic entry includes the terms of deposit, covering dates for the collection, summary of its contents, extent



(usually in boxes or number of items), restrictions on access or copying and the date the records were received.

Details about the source of the accession and contact information for the depositor or donor are also recorded in the CALM database. This information is confidential and as such is not available to researchers.

We have recorded current accessions information on our CALM database since 2012. We recognise the fact that the service has a poor history of retaining collections information, however where details can be found information about the collections received prior to 2012 this has also been added from earlier accessions registers and paper lists. The database therefore includes some information about collections from 1955 onwards although there is often less detail available for earlier accessions.

Since 2012 accessions numbers have been comprised of the year of deposit followed by a slash and a sequential number, e.g. 2016/042. Between the late 1950s and 2012 accessions were given sequential numbers between 0001 and 1033. Materials which were in the custody of City of York Council prior to the establishment of the archive in 1955 were not accessioned but were controlled in series identified by alphabetical references A-M.

### **3.5 Cataloguing**

Cataloguing our collections is essential so that we can manage efficiently the information they contain and provide public access. Cataloguing priorities are assessed each year and included in the annual Forward Plan. We identify our listing priorities based on a number of criteria, including customer demand. More information about these criteria can be found on our website.

We have been cataloguing our archival collections on the CALM collections management system since 2012. We will work towards providing a single, complete catalogue covering all the collections in our care, which will be available online. The catalogues will as far as possible conform to the following international standards and best practice:

- International Standards for Archival Description (General) – ISAD(G) 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (International Council on Archives, 1999);

- International Standard for Describing Functions – ISDF 1<sup>st</sup> edition (International Council on Archives, 2007);
- International Standard for Bibliographic Description – ISBD consolidated edition (IFLA Cataloguing Section / ISBC Review Group, 2011);
- Guidelines for the Cataloguing of Rare Books (CILIP, 2007);
- Dublin Core metadata set for digital image and digital audio-visual metadata (ISO 15836);
- International Standard Archival Authority Record for Corporate Bodies, Persons and Families – ISAAR (CPF) 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (International Council on Archives, 2004);
- Rules for the Construction of Place Names – NCA Rules (National Council on Archives, 1997);
- The UK Archival Thesaurus – UKAT (UKAT, 2004)

Our approach to cataloguing is inspired by the More Product, Less Process methodology, which prioritises collection and series level descriptions as opposed to item-level detail. This enables us to maximise the numbers of collections available with limited capacity and resources. Each collection is assessed as to the most appropriate level of cataloguing to provide rapid access.

Detailed information about the cataloguing process, including the roles of archivists, para-professional staff and volunteers in MPLP, is available in our procedural manual.

Key information about catalogued collections is exported to our searchable and public online catalogue, which is available through Explore’s website. This includes reference number, extent, date, record title, description and restrictions on access or copying. Information about digital records also includes their original format or storage medium.

We export details of newly-listed collections quarterly, or in response to customer demand, to enable public access to those records.

Depositors and donors are provided with paper or electronic lists of their records, depending on their preference.

We recognise that, in common with other archives services, we have a backlog of unlisted archives, and that this is a major barrier to public access. This backlog was reviewed as part of our York: Gateway to History project between 2014 and 2016, and backlog cataloguing now forms part of our annual Forward Plans. New accessions are catalogued within a year of deposit to avoid adding to the backlog.

Volunteers have made a significant contribution to our service in the past and continue to do so. We endeavour to offer volunteer cataloguing placement opportunities to help us box-list, catalogue and repackage collections, whilst balancing the needs of the volunteers with the ongoing needs of the service.

Summary information about newly acquired archives or significant accruals is provided annually to the Accessions to Repositories Survey, administered by The National Archives, London.

### **3.6 Indexing**

We recognise the increasing need to place records in a wider context. As a result, as many name authority files for corporate, family, individual and place names as possible will be attached to catalogue records of archival collections at the higher levels of hierarchy during the cataloguing process. Linked Data and other standards will be used to enable data exchange with other international and national portals.

### **3.7 Collections information in use**

Our aim is to ensure that the resources put into cataloguing give audiences information that is accurate, insightful, relevant and accessible. Whilst archival description and finding aids are the most important of access tools, we do not presume either to be able or for it to be desirable that the archives catalogue provides a single, authoritative voice on the content, context, meaning and significance of the records it describes.

We therefore recognise that information about the collections in our care may be held by others outside the staff or volunteer resources formally connected with the service. We aim to acknowledge and tap into other sources of information, expertise or understanding from outside the staff body and to give respect and value to these 'other voices' by making newly-revealed information

about records permanently accessible to all audiences through enhanced cataloguing, description and interpretation.

We will employ a multi-layered and flexible approach which is responsive to and incorporates audience-generated input whilst at the same time retaining a definitive status within catalogue records undertaken to professional standards as described above. This will react to the needs and responses of audiences. We will also be proactive in improving and adding to existing information about individual items or groups of items on an ad hoc basis, including the addition of digital images, the results of research, new interpretations of items or retrospective documentation. This is most likely to be as the outcome of externally-funded projects.

### **3.8 Items on loan**

All items on loan to other organisations will be documented on our CALM collections management software (or on Workflows where the loan relates to special collections material). A copy of our Loan Agreement, which includes the terms and conditions of loans, must be completed and signed by both parties in advance of the transfer of items. This loan agreement will be retained in hard copy for a period of three years after the loaned items have been returned, before being securely destroyed.

### **3.9 Appraisal and deaccessioning**

As described in section 2.6 above, appraisal is the process of distinguishing records of continuing value from those of no further value, so that the latter may be eliminated. Explore's policy is to develop and implement strategies which enable robust and coherent appraisal decisions to be made, and that these appraisal decisions are transparent and fully recorded.

Appraisal for archival purposes selects records of the highest archival value, avoiding duplication. More information about the process involved in appraisal and the criteria used can be found in sections 2.2 and 2.6 above.

We will record information about appraisal decisions and disposals relating to archives at the highest level of archival hierarchy in the catalogue, in keeping with the International Standard for Archival Description (General) 2nd edition (International Council on Archives, 1999), the International Standard on

Information and documentation: Records Management – Part 1: General (BS ISO 15489-1, 2001) and the Lord Chancellor’s Code of Practice on the management of records issued under section 46 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (2009).

We will document the disposal of special collections materials including the date and staff member involved, the criteria used in appraisal and the disposition method. Such information will be held outside the archives catalogues (other than recording disposition of items within a wider collection for which a collections-level record is included in the catalogue).

All records relating to deaccessioning and disposal will be retained permanently.

## **4. Collections Care and Conservation**

### **4.1 Statement of Intent**

We have a responsibility to ensure that the documents in our care can be accessed, used and enjoyed now and in the future. Internally we aim to implement the best practicable standards of collections care, with an emphasis on preventative care of both our physical and digital collections. Similarly we will ensure that any preservation or conservation work we commission from external providers follows the best practicable standards.

Our collections care programme is designed to mitigate the risks and threats to the long-term survival and accessibility of our archives and local history collections. This section therefore covers the following areas:

- Definition of preservation
- Our holdings
- Threats to collections
- Preventative conservation
- Remedial conservation
- Disaster Response Preparedness
- Communication and Training

Digital preservation can be found in section 5 of this document.

## 4.2 Definition of Preservation

Preservation encompasses the actions enabling the materials in our care – either the physical media themselves or the information they contain – to be retained indefinitely. These materials are kept by Explore ‘for posterity’ and use by researchers both in the present and in the future.

Preservation is a wide-ranging term covering:

- Managerial and financial considerations such as storage and accommodation, staffing levels and policies
- Physical storage facilities and environment
- Managerial and administrative procedures and decisions affecting how items are stored, and how and how often they are used
- Physical processes of repairing individual items through specialist conservation treatments
- Physical processes of reformatting including the creation of surrogate copies, through microfilming and digitisation.

Preservation is a responsibility for which staff take the lead, but which is a responsibility shared by all researchers of the collections. Preventative preservation activities underpin every activity that takes place and need explicitly to be incorporated into the everyday work of the archives service.

## 4.3 Our Holdings

The materials we hold are of a range of basic media, including:

- Manuscript on parchment
- Manuscript on paper
- Typescript or photocopied processes on paper
- Conventional printing processes on paper
- One-layer photographic materials (e.g. Daguerreotype)
- Two-layer photographic materials (e.g. wet collodion glass plate negatives, gelatin dry glass plate negatives)
- Three-layer photographic materials (e.g. collodion printing papers)

- Magnetic tape
- Digital formats

In addition to these media, the format (or manner or arrangement, such as bound volume, folded paper, CD-ROM) will involve some or all of the following physical processes or products which bring a mix of media:

- Pigments in ink, bindings, endpapers and seals
- Adhesives including 'Scottish' glue, starch paste, PVA, India rubber-based
- Bindings of a combination of materials including wood, millboard, leather, buckram, vellum, bookcloth, bleached or unbleached linen/calico/cotton,
- Card mounts and frames (usually metal or wood)
- Wax seals (of three main kinds)
- Seals of other materials including lac/shellac, lead, gutta-percha

Sizes vary, as does the quality of materials (dependent on the manufacturing process). The greatest range of quality is that of the holdings on paper, varying from highly acidic newspaper to good quality paper with an alkaline buffer. The longevity of parchment, photographic materials and magnetic media will also be heavily influenced by the quality of the original manufacturing process, in particular the proper removal of acids and other chemicals.

#### **4.4 Threats to the collections**

The holdings are at risk from a range of threats of which the risk must be mitigated or minimised, or the threat actively combated or removed.

Extrinsic threats include:

- Fire
- Flood
- Atmospheric pollution
- Insect and mould infestation
- Theft
- Vandalism
- Poor handling
- Terrorism



Intrinsic threats are those inherent in the media themselves, including the results of the manufacturing process (see section 4.3) and electronic file formats (see section 5 for more detailed information on digital preservation).

## **4.5 Preventative conservation**

### **4.5.1 Standards**

Standards are vital in ensuring reliable preservation procedures. We will comply with relevant standards as far as possible and will maintain a watching brief on relevant and appropriate standards as they emerge, with a view to adopting any that are appropriate and considered useful. In particular, we will ensure that all preservation and conservation work adheres to BS4971:2002, PAS 197:2009, PAS 198:2000 and PD5454:2012.

### **4.5.2 Storage of archive collections**

All archives and unique published materials are held in accommodation that conforms to PD5454:2012 - *Guidance for the storage and exhibition of archival materials*.

Approximately one third of the collection is held in our on-site store at York Explore Library and Archive, Museum Street, York, YO1 7DS, which provides an environmentally controlled and secure environment. Archives are stored according to their physical nature and condition, in low-acid boxes or preservation packaging, on clearly-labelled mobile and static steel shelving or in map drawers. The store and plant is inspected as per Explore's ongoing maintenance schedule, and regular servicing and testing of the fire detection system, intruder alarm system and mobile shelving is carried out.

Two-thirds of the collections is stored offsite with the commercial records storage and management company Deepstore. Deepstore's facilities conform to PD5454: 2012.

### **4.5.3 Fire prevention and safety**

Our on-site store is fitted with 4-hour fire doors and is constructed to be fire-resistant on all sides. It is fitted with an aspirant fire detection system. Smoke detectors are located throughout the York Explore

building. The alarm system is monitored by the North Yorkshire Fire Brigade, who respond to any unplanned activation.

Automatic fire suppression is not installed but fire extinguishers are present throughout the archives store and building. In the event of a fire an automated system of dampers stops air flow in the trunking of the air conditioning system.

#### **4.5.4 Security of collections**

We are committed to ensuring appropriate levels of security to reduce the risk of vandalism, theft and terrorism. We have an anti-terrorism policy and relevant procedures, which we will apply in the event of an attack.

CCTV cameras are fitted throughout York Explore. Explore records and monitors footage from the internal cameras in a communal office during opening hours. The external cameras are monitored remotely 24 hours a day by City of York Council city security teams.

An intruder alarm is set outside of opening hours. In the event of an activation an external security agency responds automatically to the call. All doors are fitted with appropriate locks.

Access to archive storage areas is restricted to trained staff and operated by electronic security fobs.

Whilst visitors are not required to sign in and out of the building, due to its main function as a public library accessible to all, access to the Archives Reading Room is restricted. The room is secured by fob activated doors, which may only be released by staff. We provide lockers for visitors to secure their personal possessions, and ensure that large items and bags are not brought into the secure area of the research room. The Archives Reading Room is supervised by a member of staff whenever archives are in use.

#### **4.5.5 Environmental monitoring and controls**

The environmental conditions within all storage areas and the Archives Reading Room are monitored continuously. Digital loggers are used to record the temperature and relative humidity within the store and Archives Reading Room. The data is collected twice daily by para-professional staff and is collated and analysed by archivists. All staff are trained to report any abnormalities to an archivist and the York Explore building manager to ensure a prompt investigation and response.

The environment in our on-site store is controlled by a bespoke Munters air conditioning system. It provides temperature and relative humidity controls in line with PD5454:2012 – *Guidance for the storage and exhibition of archival materials* and PAS 198:2012 – *Specification for managing environmental conditions for cultural collections*.

We are also committed to continually improving our environmental performance – to reduce our energy use and our carbon emissions. For this reason we will look to find the best balance between passive and active environmental control solutions. We will therefore document, monitor, review and continually improve our environmental management systems in co-operation with professional bodies.

#### **4.5.6 Storage enclosures**

Appropriate packaging and storage reduces the risk of damage to the archival collections.

To protect new accessions from dust and damage from accidental water ingress, we use industry standard conservation products: high quality acid-free paper and board, polyester sleeves, unbleached tape and brass paperclips which meet the technical specifications recommended for archival use. We also carry out a programme of re-boxing and of repackaging earlier accessions which were not prepared to current standards.

Holdings will be housed in acid-free boxes. Where this is not possible, for example due to the size of an item, a Tyvek® cover will be used instead. Documents will be labelled and packed in a manner which reduces the

need for handling. Photographs will be stored in polyester or Silver-safe® enclosures, rolled items will be protected with Tyvek® and vulnerable unboxed material will be wrapped and stored appropriately.

In line with our 'More Product, Less Process' (MPLP) approach to cataloguing some larger collections, we may choose to adopt a limited repackaging approach for certain types of records, where they are currently stable in their original housing. In those circumstances the minimum level of repackaging we would provide would be acid-free boxes.

#### **4.5.7 Housekeeping**

Staff are trained to clean storage areas in a way that is not detrimental to the collections. Chemical-based products are avoided when cleaning areas where documents are kept. Documents themselves will only be cleaned by or under the supervision of a professionally trained conservator, or following specific training by a conservator.

The physical condition of all new accessions will be assessed in a secure climate controlled workspace before being allowed into the storage area. Particular care is taken to ensure that the introduction of pests is prevented. Contaminated archive material, which has the potential to harm or infect other collections, will be placed in isolation and assessed by trained conservation staff.

Archives staff are trained to recognise the symptoms of presence of mould or pests. If they are discovered in the collection, affected items will be quarantined and a professionally trained conservator contacted immediately for advice. Items will remain quarantined until the risk of contagion has passed. If this is not possible, the affected records may be sent to an external conservator or company for treatment, or be removed from the collection and disposed of in accordance with the Terms of Deposit.

#### **4.5.8 Handling**

Practicality dictates that archives must be handled by staff and by service users for research and access purposes. In certain circumstances we may

choose to create surrogate copies of items in a collection – particularly heavily used collections – to facilitate access and prevent additional wear and tear on the original documents.

Staff and volunteers are trained in handling archives and promoting best practice, and volunteers always work under the supervision of a trained member of staff. We provide researchers with appropriate aids, such as book cushions and rests, and a variety of weights to protect books and archives, and show them how to use them. Fragile items are identified and withheld from public access, and conservation treatments are scheduled as resources permit.

#### **4.5.9 Exhibition guidelines**

We recognise both the benefits of displaying archives and the risks of exhibiting original material. Material from our collections is made available for exhibition in line with national and professional standards.

We have a display case located on the ground floor of York Explore to highlight our collections and our work. The case is secure and conforms to international standards. It is located to avoid excessive vibrations, sources of strong light, radiators and external walls. This display case is only used for temporary exhibitions, and we frequently change the contents to minimise damage to the items on display.

#### **4.5.10 Surrogates**

Staff have investigated the latest and alternative methods for the safe copying of archival material and the provision of surrogate copies, and implement appropriate systems and processes, supported by policies, guidelines and training. The methods used will be monitored for any technological improvements / advancements and upgraded when and where necessary.

All copying and access equipment is kept in good order and maintained according to the manufacturer's warranties and recommendations.

Surrogate copies are made available in a format that has longevity and is easily accessible, for collections and material that is heavily used and / or

in poor condition. Where a surrogate is available, access will not usually be provided to the original item except in the case of a specialist requirement which cannot be met by the surrogate (e.g. examination of watermarks for dating purposes).

Microfilming is carried out to BS ISO 6199:2005 *Micrographics – microfilming of documents on 16mm and 35mm silver-gelatin type microfilm – Operating procedures* by a bureau which is authorised as compliant with the standards.

The correct storage environment is available for master and preservation copies according to their format and the relevant standard.

## **4.6 Remedial conservation**

### **4.6.1 Introduction**

Explore does not have an in-house conservation studio, nor does it employ professionally-qualified conservators as part of its core staff. We will liaise with fully qualified local conservators where specialist advice is required, and procure their services on a temporary basis or outsource specialist work as necessary.

### **4.6.2 Decision to treat**

Fragile and unstable documents are identified by members of staff and marked as such on the CALM database. If these items have previously been available on public access, they will be withdrawn to prevent further damage until they can be stabilised or repaired.

Remedial conservation is undertaken only when necessary, to ensure the long-term safety of vulnerable material. Individual items are prioritised for treatment depending on available resources, user demand, the context of the item within the collection and its physical condition. Decisions about priorities are set by the archives team.

When looking to have documents repaired we ask that as much of the original document is retained as possible, whilst ensuring that long-term stability and accessibility are maintained. The future storage format,

storage location and anticipated use also influence the level of treatment applied.

#### **4.6.3 Practitioners**

When making the decision to contract-out conservation work, we will ensure that all work is carried out by an appropriately trained and qualified conservator, and that all work is carried out to current international standards.

We may also offer opportunities for volunteers to work under the direct supervision of a Project Archivist or Conservator on the repackaging of documents, creating lists, labels and boxes, and basic remedial tasks such as surface cleaning. All volunteers recruited for such work will be required to complete Explore's Volunteer Agreement.

#### **4.6.4 Documentation**

For all remedial conservation projects, we will ask that the condition before and after treatment is documented, along with all conservation work. This information will be added to the CALM record. Photographic documentation will be retained electronically or in hard copy as appropriate.

### **4.7 Disaster prevention and recovery**

#### **4.7.1 Disaster Prevention and Recovery Plan**

We maintain a Disaster Prevention and Recovery Plan. The plan outlines a framework for the mitigation of risk and guidelines for disaster preparedness. It also details procedures and actions in the event of an emergency, enabling staff to act swiftly to minimise damage to the building and holdings.

The plan is reviewed annually and updated when necessary. All relevant members of staff are given a hard copy of the disaster plan, and a digital copy is filed on the network server. Practical training for all staff in responding to disaster situations is provided periodically.



#### **4.7.2 Harwell Subscription**

Explore subscribes to Harwell Drying Restoration Priority Use Plus Service, which in the event of a disaster will provide recovery and emergency salvage services.

#### **4.7.3 Disaster response and salvage equipment**

Salvage equipment can be found in the store link area of York Explore, directly outside the archives store. Items belonging to the salvage kit are checked and monitored annually.

Provision has also been made for access to further supplies in the event of an incident on a large scale.

### **4.8 Communication and training**

#### **4.8.1 Collections care awareness**

We are committed to promoting the knowledge about best practice and the importance of collections care. We provide advice and guidance to departments of City of York Council, outside organisations and institutions, community groups, owners of private archives and the general public. We also supply information electronically through our website.

#### **4.8.2 Staff training**

We support and develop all staff to deliver high quality services in line with Explore's overall corporate strategy. All staff and volunteers are trained in handling archives and in safe working practices.

#### **4.8.3 Professional bodies**

We maintain active professional relationships with the local and national archival and preservation communities and organisations in the UK, including the Archives and Records Association (UK and Ireland).

## 5. Digital preservation

### 5.1 Introduction

We acknowledge that there is currently no guarantee for the long-term preservation of digital objects, and understand the vulnerability of born digital records, digital surrogates and analogue media in our care.

This section complements the other sections of this policy relating to collections development, collections information and collections care and conservation. Born digital records are also governed by our responsibilities under the Freedom of Information Act and the UK Data Protection Act 2018.

In establishing a framework for processes this policy does not guarantee compliance with the legal requirements of admissibility of evidence.

### 5.2 Definitions

Born digital archives are defined as material that has been created digitally and identified for permanent preservation amongst the archival resources managed by Explore. We make no distinction between materials created by City of York Council and those created and deposited by third parties.

### 5.3 General principles

As with paper material Explore needs to help ensure the authenticity, reliability and long-term accessibility of born-digital material. The ability to collect, manage and provide access to born-digital archives is necessary to strengthen the service's role in developing our collections for use by a range of audiences for a range of purposes.

Our default position will be to migrate and normalise file formats, but we do recognise that in some circumstances there is a richer 'experience' of the material through the emulation of the computer environment. Staff will keep a watching brief on projects and initiatives relating to both file format migration and the successful use of emulation to provide access to born-digital archives.

It may be technically possible to preserve the physical bytes of digital content, however we cannot guarantee that all content can be made accessible in a

meaningful way due to software obsolescence. This distinction will be made clear by staff when dealing with depositors.

All digital objects will be incorporated into a five year periodic refresh schedule in which carriers and formats will be reviewed against current technology and refreshed or migrated as appropriate.

#### **5.4 Standards**

Explore will adhere to standards and emerging good practice for all stages in the digital curation lifecycle including the collection, storage, management, preservation and dissemination of digital content. Through active engagement with colleagues working in both the archives and digital repository sectors Explore will maintain a watching brief on key areas and remain at the forefront of good practice in the UK.

In particular, we will manage collections in a manner that conforms to the requirements of the Open Archival Information System Model (OAIS) (ISO 14721:2003) and the PREMIS Data Dictionary for Preservation Metadata maintained by the Library of Congress.

#### **5.5 Trusted Digital Repository**

Whilst our current manual-based infrastructure will help to address the issue of digital preservation, we realise that we need to establish a digital repository in order to fulfil the requirements of the Open Archival Information System (OAIS) Reference Model (ISO 14721:2003) and we will work to achieve this within the first five years of the contract, with the direct support of City of York Council.

#### **5.6 Content and file formats**

Explore expects to preserve a range of born-digital content that is likely to include, but is not limited to:

- Text documents (plain and marked up)
- Still and moving image collections
- Datasets (data designed for use in spreadsheets, database and statistical packages)
- Digital audio recordings
- Websites

- Social media content including blogs, Facebook and Twitter
- Emails

We do not expect to preserve:

- Software – except for specific and educational uses
- Hardware outside of its forensic workstation capabilities

We are currently working in partnership with City of York Council to develop a digital preservation strategy that will enable us to acquire, catalogue and make available born digital records. In the meantime, we will acquire born digital records in PDF/A1-a format for documents, and lossless formats for image, audio and video files as the need arises. In producing and disseminating a list of preferred file formats we will stress that we do not exclude other formats, not do we require material to be converted prior to deposit as this may serve to undermine the technical metadata contained within the original file.

With regard to live and dynamic websites for ongoing organisations Explore's position is to encourage institutions to self-refer their sites to the British Library web-archive.

## **5.7 Access**

At present the user requirements for access to born digital archives are still being shaped and defined; changes in this area will invoke a review of both this policy and our procedures to make sure they remain relevant.

Explore is currently only in a position to provide access to the born-digital archives we have received via email to enquirers. All material that has currently been received is photographic or audio content with full consent from the depositors to disseminate it. No born digital material currently held by Explore is subject to the UK Data Protection Act 2018.

Going forward, Explore will commit to liaising with potential depositors about the potential of archives containing sensitive information in addition to the content and file formats. As the service develops the technical infrastructure to receive, manage and provide access to born-digital media Explore will review this position and consider evolving practice across the sector.

### **5.8 Digitisation / reprographics**

We recognise the value of using digital technology to increase access to archives and safeguard our original collections. Some of our records have been made available through a commercial partner, Find My Past, and we will look to extend this offer in future years.

We also provide digital copies of our records to customers by request, and they are able to take their own copies on-site, subject to the terms of our digital licences.

### **5.9 Withdrawal of content**

The circumstances within which born-digital archives can be withdrawn by the depositor (or their successors) will be discussed at the time of deposit and set out within the deposit agreement. Withdrawal of material is not applicable in the case of material donated to Explore. As a matter of policy, we are unable to guarantee that metadata will not persist, and it is our preference that metadata should be retained to provide an audit trail of the accession and de-accession history of the material.

### **5.10 Storage including storage media**

Until a Trusted Digital Repository can be established (see section 5.5), born digital content will be stored in an electronic folder which is backed-up nightly on the City of York Council secure servers. Storage will be monitored for resilience and content integrity as part of ongoing collections management. Content will be prepared for preservation storage through the generation of relevant fixity checks, associated derivatives and metadata to support future use.

It is expected that content will be received on a wide range of current and historic storage media formats and the priority will be to safely transfer content from these media to secure network storage. Once the data has been successfully captured from the original media and ingested into the digital repository the original media effectively become artefacts. These may be of interest to users but there is not always a compelling need to retain all such media permanently. Original deposited media will be retained initially but the usefulness of this will be reviewed on a regular basis.



**explore**  
Libraries and Archives

Archives and Local History Collections Policy  
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