

## Explore York Libraries and Archives Archives and Local History Access policy

### Purpose

The purpose of Explore York Libraries and Archives is to carry on business for the benefit of the community by:

- a) Advancing education, culture, arts, heritage and history for the public benefit particularly (without limitation) by providing and maintaining library, archive, learning and related services for the people of York and the surrounding area; and
- b) Providing for the public benefit facilities for recreation or other leisure time occupation of individuals who have need of such facilities by reason of their youth, age, infirmity or disablement, financial hardship or social and economic circumstances or for the public at large, in the interests of social welfare and with the object of improving the condition of life of such people.

The archives supports this purpose by preserving, augmenting and giving public access to archives and published local history materials owned by and in the custody of City of York Council. We are specifically responsible for the preservation and secure storage of records of permanent legal or historical value created or received by City of York Council and its predecessors in law.

We also collect archival material as outlined in our collecting policy, namely:

- 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 other 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.

### Objective

The objectives of Explore York Libraries and Archives are:

- To promote the joy of reading
- To support everyone's health and wellbeing

- To be the focus of communities, safe welcoming spaces for all, building resilient communities
- To be places of learning, discovery and creativity
- To be a strong and sustainable organisation

The archives supports these objectives by maintaining a permanent publicly-accessible record of the heritage and culture of the City of York and its people as an historical and educational resource, and as a focus for promoting civic pride, local identity, and active citizenship.

## **Context**

We are committed to providing access to the resources in our care, and we subscribe to the principles of the Public Services Quality Group 'Standard for Access to Archives', which has been adopted by the Archives & Records Association UK & Ireland.

The standard does not seek to create new rights of access; instead it emphasises the conditions necessary to ensure rights of access are meaningful in the practical circumstances of our service.

Adoption of the standard or any part of it is voluntary, but it forms a set of performance criteria in this area of its work.

This Access Policy should be read in conjunction with our Customer First standards, which set out our commitment to providing an excellent service to all our users. Explore York Libraries and Archives' Equal Opportunities Policy, and procedures such as those for customer suggestions and complaints also form the local framework to this policy.

## **Statutory framework for access to information**

The legislative framework covering access to information in the collections comprises:

- The Data Protection Act 1998;
- The Freedom of Information Act 2000;
- The Environmental Information Regulations (EIRs) 2004.

## **Scope of the access policy**

This access policy focuses on the means by which our collections are offered for use either directly or indirectly. It includes both physical and intellectual access, onsite and remote. It will assist in decision making and prioritising work in a range of circumstances, including:

- Providing access to the holdings, which is balanced with their long-term preservation and legislative requirements;
- Cataloguing work by staff and volunteers;
- The submission of funding bids with an access and audience development aspect;
- Improvements to accommodation for customers including the development of new accommodation.

Access is a wide-ranging term which encompasses:

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- managerial and financial considerations such as accommodation, staffing levels and policies;
- physical facilities for researchers visiting the service;
- facilities for researchers using the service at a distance;
- promotion of the collections, historical and local research, and the archives service;
- legislative, managerial and administrative procedures and decisions affecting how items are described and used;
- intellectual processes of describing individual items through cataloguing and indexing to internationally agreed professional standards.

Please note that this policy excludes City of York Council records which remain in the possession of council departments and its arms-length bodies, until those selected for permanent preservation as archives are transferred to the custody of Explore York Libraries and Archives.

## **General principles**

The communities which we serve extend beyond the boundaries of City of York Council, and we have multiple sets of stakeholders. These are people, corporate bodies or defined groups with an interest in the present and future activities of our service, including depositors and future researchers (the purpose of the preservation of the records in our care).

We will continue to subscribe to the aims and spirit of the PSQG standard. In implementing the standard we will be guided by its aims and spirit rather than a narrow interpretation of the text. We shall aim to serve our communities as effectively and efficiently as possible, and shall seek to serve all of our communities, devising a range of services appropriate to each community's stated or implied needs.

We will aim to encourage as much access by researchers to primary and secondary source material as is compatible with the permanent preservation of unique and irreplaceable material. There should be a presumption of openness and any restrictions should conform to tightly defined criteria.

We shall define the objectives we are seeking to achieve in our annual business plans, and will consult with stakeholders to develop and review our objectives through the means of our Archives Advisory Group. The satisfaction of researchers will be amongst our primary objectives, and we will explicitly plan to achieve those objectives and consult with stakeholders in developing that plan through our Archives Advisory Group. Systems will be in place to measure our performance against our plans, and explicit responses will be made to over-and under-performance and to stakeholder feedback to maintain an appropriate balance of resources over the full range of objectives.

We have defined customer feedback mechanisms and complaints procedures, and clear channels of communication to and from other stakeholders. We shall communicate to stakeholders our definition of stakeholders, our objectives, our plans, our performance, the means of communicating with us, and our response to feedback.

In offering access to our collections, our users are active participants and have responsibilities as well as rights. We will clearly communicate and enforce those responsibilities.

## Catalogues and documentation

Encouraging and improving access to the collections in our care is a key objective for us, and access to information fundamentally depends on us having adequate catalogues for searching and document retrieval

Following the opening of our new Archives and Local History service in January 2015, we are currently systematically working through our collections and re-cataloguing them to current international standards.

We will continually seek to reduce our cataloguing backlogs and ensure that as much incoming material is catalogued to international standards as soon as reasonably possible after receipt.

Cataloguing backlogs for archives will be prioritised, and the resulting access plan will be reviewed and updated bi-annually. The following criteria will be assessed:

- Level of support of Explore's objectives
- Level of existing and potential customer demand
- Ownership
- Length of time held
- Whether the collection is already listed in some form
- Size of collection

Assessment of collections will be made at departmental collections meetings, and will weigh all the above criteria as is appropriate.

We will work towards providing a single, complete catalogue covering all the collections in our care, which will be available online at [www.exploreyork.org.uk](http://www.exploreyork.org.uk). This catalogue will be searchable remotely and in our Archive and Local History service at York Explore Library. It will as far as possible conform to the following international standards and best practice:

- International Standard for Archival Description (General) – ISAD(G) 2nd edn (International Council on Archives, 1999);
- International Standard for Describing Functions – ISDF 1st edn (International Council on Archives, 2007);
- MACHINE READABLE CATALOGUING CONCISE FORMAT FOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC DATA - MARC 21 (Library of Congress, 2006);
- Dublin Core metadata set for digital image metadata;
- International Standard Archival Authority Record for Corporate Bodies, Persons, and Families - ISAAR(CPF) 2nd edn (International Council on Archives, 2004);
- Rules for the Construction of Place Names – NCA Rules (National Council on Archives, 1997);
- The UK Archival Thesaurus (UKAT)

All our incoming material, whether archives, local history stock or special collections, will be fully accessioned within two weeks of receipt. Recent accessions will be regularly publicised through appropriate channels, including our website, social media, and reported annually to the National Register of Archives.

We will also seek to publish guides to our holdings to improve and encourage access to the collections. These will be made available in an online format available remotely and in the Archives and Local History service at York Explore Library.

We will work with colleagues in the region and nationally to develop a 'joined up' approach to increasing access to the archive and local studies collections. We will also take part in initiatives such as the Archives Hub to further widen our reach, and will supply copies of completed archive catalogues to the National Register of Archives.

We will facilitate placements with students, with local heritage groups and other societies, and with individuals, to undertake basic cataloguing, transcription and indexing of records.

## **Onsite access**

Our searchroom is the main frontline service delivery point and will deliver services to researchers in line with our Customer First standards, where staffing levels allow. In addition, researchers visiting the searchroom can expect:

- Staff and volunteers to be identifiable;
- Professionally qualified staff to be available by appointment to advise on suitable sources of information held either by us or elsewhere;
- A range of finding aids and catalogues providing access points to the collections, and reference materials complementing the collections in line with our Collecting Policy;
- Study space which is pleasant and clean, with additional equipment such as magnifiers available;
- Premises to comply with the Disability Equality Duty in the Disability Discrimination Act;
- Advice and guidance on the suitable handling of original materials and protective equipment which assists customers to fulfil their responsibilities to the long-term preservation of original materials (see our 'Archives Reading Room Guidelines')
- Presentation facilities and an information architecture for digital materials which is capable of supporting the retrieval and use of digital archives by users.
- To be made aware of the security measures in place including invigilation and recording of personal details in line with the Data Protection Act 1998;
- To be made aware of their responsibilities towards and expectations of the behaviour of other users;
- Access to customer suggestion and complaint forms;
- Free internet access and computing facilities in line with Explore York Libraries and Archives' internet and Wifi offer;
- A range of reprographics services that meet the needs of the user without placing materials at risk of damage and which are provided in line with the requirements of the Copyright Designs and Patents Act 1988 and subsequent legislation;
- Retrievals from secure areas to be completed within 20 minutes of a request. If there is likely to be a delay the customer will be informed of this;
- Items that are not yet catalogued may be made available to customers if an archivist considers that the retrieval of such items can be made in a reasonable time, and without risk of loss or damage.

## **Remote, explicit access via enquiries**

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We encourage customers who are unable to visit in person to use our remote information services or contact us directly; our response to such contact will be in line with Explore York Library and Archives' Customer First standards. In addition, those contacting us direct can expect:

- To be told the name of the staff member dealing with their enquiry;
- To be able to order photographic work and access other services such as research services or purchasing publications by post;
- To be advised in advance of fees and charges payable.

## **Fees & charges**

We currently offer two levels of service to customers who cannot visit in person:

- Routine enquiries about our Archives and Local History service including making appointments, availability of particular sources etc: free
- Requests for copies (eg, extracts from books, pamphlets, newspapers & journals etc) where exact references are supplied: small charge for the cost of the copies and handling.

We do not currently offer a paid research service for extensive enquiries from people who are unable to visit in person, however we do provide a list of local researchers who can be contacted to undertake research on behalf of someone who can't come to visit us themselves. We are not in a position to recommend any researcher in particular or accept any responsibility for the work that they produce.

Fees are also payable for the reproduction of items in our collections; these may be waived in lieu of copies of publications containing the items being given to us for our holdings if these would fall within the scope of our Collecting Policy. These arrangements will be made on a case by case basis. Application for the reproduction of images must be made in advance.

Advance notice will always be given of applicable fees and charges so that charges are not incurred by users inadvertently; where charges are payable they must be paid in advance.

Where charges are set, they are agreed and reviewed annually by the City Archivist and Archivist (Access & Engagement), in conjunction with Explore York Libraries and Archives' Senior Management Team. The list of current fees and charges will be available in the Archives and Local History service at York Explore Library and from our website.

## **Remote, implicit access (eg. via websites, audience development events)**

We will make information available on our website and in other appropriate web directories and regional/national networks such as the Archives Hub, ARCHON and the National Register of Archives. This will include physical access information such as opening hours, contact details and directions to our service, as well as fees and charges, details of how to order photographs and copies. Our website and other sites will also carry as much searchable information about the content of our collections as possible.

We will also seek to engage, enthuse and inform those who are not our customers by undertaking a range of outreach activities. These include organised tours of the archives service, talks, schools visits, children's activities and volunteer opportunities. Those with whom we engage in this way can expect:

- An excellent level of service from polite, helpful and suitably trained staff;
- Staff who are identifiable as such;
- Professionally qualified staff available by appointment to advise on suitable sources of information held either by the Service or elsewhere;
- Advice and guidance on suitable handling of original archival & special collections material;
- Access to customer suggestion/complaint/feedback forms.

## **Restrictions on access to information**

We recognise the general right of access to information held by public authorities, provided by the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations (EIRs) 2004. Requests for information will be completed within the statutory 20 working day period.

Certain records may be deemed 'not yet open' to public inspection if they contain information that would breach the Data Protection Act 1998 if disclosed to a third party. Procedures are in place to deal with access to an enquirer's own personal information, deemed 'Subject Access Requests'.

Duty staff are available to give further advice on access to such material.

## **Exemptions for archival records**

Restrictions on access will be noted as far as possible in our online catalogue, and will be amended to reflect the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004.

## **Records containing personal information (other than specific categories listed below)**

In line with The National Archives, Archives & Records Association, Information & Records Management Society and National Association of Information Managers Code Of Practice For Archivists And Records Managers under Section 51(4) of The Data Protection Act 1998 (version 6, amended to take account of the comments of the Information Commissioner's officer of 21/12/06), access to personal data in archives by someone other than the data subject or the data controller (or his employees) will normally be permitted for historical or statistical research under the relevant conditions, namely that:

- The data is not processed to support measures or decisions relating to particular individuals, and
- The data is not processed in such a way that substantial damage or substantial distress is, or is likely to be, caused to any data subject.

Such access will be subject to closure periods up to a maximum of 100 years, the assumed lifetime of the individual. In administering shorter closure periods or otherwise authorising disclosure of data, we will be able to cite conditions in Schedules 2 and 3 of the Data Protection Act 1998 as applicable and will consider the criteria that access must be lawful and fair, taking into account matters including any duty of confidence, the nature and age of the information, and the credibility of the data.

Steps will be taken to safeguard the fair and lawful use of data including:

- Explaining to intending researchers the "relevant conditions" that apply to the research use of particular data, including sensitive personal data (see 4.2);

- Requiring researchers to sign a declaration that, as a condition of access to data that might otherwise be closed, they will comply with the relevant conditions and Data Protection Principles (1, 3-4 and 6-8);
- Informing researchers that they are responsible under the Act for any processing by them of personal data disclosed to them, including copying, realignment, transmission abroad and publication (see 4.1.6).

### **Uncatalogued collections (Freedom of Information Act s. 22)**

Collections which are uncatalogued may be exempt, in that they are intended for publication at a future date as part of the office's cataloguing programme. We will develop a list of cataloguing priorities for the archives as part of our annual access plan.

The City Archivist, in conjunction with the team of professional archivists, can advise on access to uncatalogued collections.

### **Other privately deposited records (Freedom of Information Act s. 41)**

Some privately owned records may be exempt if they were deposited with a confidentiality agreement between the Explore York Libraries and Archives and the owner.

### **Monitoring access – performance indicators**

As part of our annual reporting we collect data about access to our collections, including:

- Total numbers of visitors to the Archives and Local History service;
- Number of archives researchers;
- Number of documents retrieved;
- Number of new catalogue entries added to CALM;
- Number of requests for material which we can't yet fulfil;
- Number of enquiries about Archives and Local History;
- Total onsite encounters with archives (incorporating the numbers of archives researchers but also including group visits and attendance at Archives and Local History events held within Explore York Libraries and Archives' venues);
- Total offsite engagement (including attendees at Archives and Local History events and talks held outside of Explore York Libraries and Archives' venues);
- Number of searches on our online image database, Imagine York;
- Number of visitors and page views of our website;
- Number of followers on our Twitter account (@YorkArchives UK).

These statistics form the basis of our annual reporting to CIPFA, as well as our Access Plan quarterly updates. Our Access Plan updates act as evidence of our activities, and are reviewed by our Board of Directors. They are also publicly available through our website ([www.exploreyork.org.uk](http://www.exploreyork.org.uk)).



## **Review of policy**

This policy will be reviewed by the City Archivist and Archivist (Access & Engagement) annually. Any changes required to this policy will be sent to the Explore York Libraries and Archives Board of Directors at the next available meeting. Otherwise, this policy will be re-ratified by the Explore Board of Directors every three years.

## Appendix 1: Data Protection researcher exemption form

### Researcher undertaking concerning access under the Data Protection Act to archives that would otherwise be closed.

I .....(NAME) request permission to consult .....(ARCHIVES REFERENCE) and agree to make use of any personal data contained therein in compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

My research will not be used to support measures or decisions with respect to particular individuals and will not cause or be likely to cause substantial damage or substantial distress to any person who is the subject of those data while he or she is alive or likely to be alive (assuming a life span of 100 years).

I will not make the results of my research available in a form that identifies any data subject without the consent in writing of the data subject or the data controller.

I understand that I shall become responsible for compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998 in relation to any processing by me of personal data obtained from the above records and undertake to dispose of this data in an appropriate manner when it is no longer required for my research.

Signed.....

Date.....

### To be completed by an archivist

Authorised by (sign and print).....

Date.....

## **Appendix 2: Current schedule of fees and charges**

### **Self-service copying (on-site)**

Digital images taken from book scanners, camera or microfilm readers: £1 each

Licences for taking multiple images from scanners, digital camera or microfilm readers: £10 per day, £25 per week or £50 per year. Organisations conducting research, such as local history groups, can also apply for an institutional reprographics licence at £100 per year, giving them two annual passes which are transferable between group members.

These charges relate to images taken for personal study only. Additional charges apply for images for publications – please see below.

Printing from microfilm readers or PCs: A4: 10p each

### **Staffed copying services (for customers off-site)**

Images taken from book scanners, camera or microfilm readers (including Imagine York images): £7 each plus £5 handling fee per order

Licensing fees for images

Commercial use: £35 per image

York partners, not-for-profits and educational textbooks: £13 per image

Certified copies of documents (e.g. vehicle registration enquiries)

All copies: £10 per item

An additional 10% of the total cost applies for international orders.