

City of York Council Archives and Local History

Collecting Policy

1. Introduction

1.1 The Archives and Local History department (subsequently 'the department') forms part of City of York Libraries and Heritage service. It is located at Explore York Library Learning Centre, Museum Street, York, YO1 7DS.

1.2 The purpose of the department is to preserve, augment and give public access to archives and published local history materials in the custody of the City of York Council. The department is specifically responsible for the preservation and secure storage of records of permanent legal or historical value created or received by the City of York Council and its predecessors in law.

1.3 The objective of the department is to maintain 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.

1.4 This policy sets out the criteria under which the department accepts new archives and local history materials into our custody for preservation and public access, and under which we periodically review our existing collections to determine whether we should continue to hold them.

1.5 This policy was approved by City of York Council on [...], and will be reviewed after five years.

2. Definitions

2.1 Records are defined as structured information created or received in the course of a person's or an organisations' activities and which are retained by that person, organisation, or their successors as evidence of those activities.

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

2.3 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.

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

online content which have been issued for use by multiple users as an information or cultural resource.

3. General statement of collecting policy

3.1 We will select, preserve and provide access to:

- i. The 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.

3.2 This general statement of collecting policy is subject to the detailed criteria set out in Section 4.

4. Scope of Collecting

4.1 Geographic

- 4.1.1 We will give the highest priority to collecting archives and published materials which relate primarily or most significantly 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.
- 4.1.2 We 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.
- 4.1.3 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.

4.2 Thematic

- 4.2.1 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.
- 4.2.2 We will comprehensively collect archives from individuals 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

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the city. These will include, but are not limited to, the archives of parish councils, businesses, clubs and societies, guilds, political parties, trade unions, pressure groups, local campaigns, families and individuals.

4.2.3 We will collect archives and published materials to represent, as far as possible, the full range of activities, cultures and viewpoints within the City of York. We will regularly review the collections in conjunction with our stakeholders to identify any gaps in their coverage and take all practicable steps to address any weak areas.

4.2.4 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 ecclesiastical history.

4.3 Chronological

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

4.3.2 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 a useful historical information value.

4.4 Format and Media.

4.4.1 We will in principle 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 as a more suitable repository for both preservation of and access to the material.
- ii. Offers of artefacts or objects will normally be directed to an appropriate museum unless the artefacts or objects 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 works of art will normally be directed to an appropriate museum or art gallery unless the works 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

4.5 Co-operation with other institutions

4.5.1 We anticipate that collecting published materials will not generally conflict with the collecting remits of other institutions as published materials normally exist in multiple copies.

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- 4.5.2 However, we will not seek to collect archives or unique published materials which clearly fall entirely within the declared collecting remit of other archive or local history services.
- 4.5.3 Where we are made aware that archives or unique published materials offered to us fall wholly or partly 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.
- 4.5.4 As far as practicable we will apply the following general principles to material 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 or communions unless the archive also has a strong and significant connection with our thematic collecting policy (section 4.3).
 - iii. We will not collect archives relating to public healthcare unless they relate to a public healthcare function of the City of York Council or its predecessors.
 - iv. We will not collect the archives of large national or international businesses 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.

5. Selection and appraisal

- 5.1 Acceptance of new archives and published materials into our custody means that we are accepting a continuing obligation to preserve this material and to give public access to it. This represents a significant long-term resource commitment by the City of York Council.
- 5.2 This means that 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 and evidential value against the resource implications and costs of acquisition.
- 5.3 Appraisals will be carried out in two stages. Offers of all new material will first be assessed against the collecting criteria set out in Section 4. 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).
- 5.4 A permanent record of the selection and appraisal decision-making process will be maintained in an Officer's Decision Log.

6. Acquisition

- 6.1 Archives and published materials will normally 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 internal transfer from other City of York Council departments.
- 6.2 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 or "permanent" deposit.
- 6.3 The precise terms of acquisition or deposit will be negotiated by us with the donor, seller 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 the legal authority to enter into an agreement with us to transfer custody of the archives or published materials.
- 6.4 Many archives in our custody prior to the approval date of this policy were accepted on indefinite deposit. 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.

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6.5A permanent accessions register will be kept and maintained to record the terms of acquisition or deposit for all archives collections, and for all published materials acquired by gift. The acquisition of published materials by purchase will be recorded in the City of York Council's financial control systems.

7. **Review**

7.1 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.

7.2 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. Loan to another public cultural institution which will maintain free public access to the material;
- ii. Transfer of title to another public cultural institution which will maintain free public access to the material;
- iii. 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;
- iv. 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;
- 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.

7.3 Where material in our custody no longer conforms to this collecting policy and is held by us on deposit 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.

7.4 A permanent record of the review process will be maintained in an Officer's Decision Log.

8. Access

8.1 Subject to the requirements of information legislation such as The Data Protection Act 1998, 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.

8.2 Subject to the requirements of information legislation such as The Data Protection Act 1998, Freedom of Information Act 2000 and Environmental Information Regulations 2004, all records kept and maintained by us as a result of the implementation of this policy will be available for public access.

9. Relevant Legislation

9.1 In implementing this policy we will observe all relevant archive and records 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
- Data Protection Act, 1998
- Freedom of Information Act, 2000

9.2 The department 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.

9.3 The department 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.

9.4 The department 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.

10. Standards

10.1 The department subscribes to the National Archives' Standard for Record Repositories.

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