

# Bath Record Office: Archives and Local Studies **Collections Information Policy**

## 1. POLICY FRAMEWORK

### 1.1 Mission Statement

Bath Record Office: Archives and Local Studies collects and keeps safe archives and local studies collections relating to Bath & North East Somerset and its people, it provides access to archives and local studies materials, promoting them for the benefit of the community, and it is the permanent home of the Council's archive.

### 1.2 Statutory and legal status

Bath Record Office: Archives and Local Studies is the authorised archive service for the custody of the official records of Bath & North East Somerset Council and its predecessor authorities under the Local Government Act, 1972.

It is an approved 'Place of Deposit' under the Public Records Acts 1958 and 1967 for a number of classes of Central Government records held locally (Public Records).

It has been empowered to acquire archives by deposit, gift or purchase and to preserve and make them available under The Local Government (Records) Act, 1962 (c.56). Section 4 of this Act also permits the allocation of resources to persons looking after such archives.

### 1.3 Council Corporate Strategy

The Council's Corporate Strategy priorities are to:

- Address the climate emergency
- Prepare for the future
- Deliver for local residents
- Focus on prevention
- Give people a bigger say

### 1.4 Service aims

Bath Record Office: Archives and Local Studies forms part of Heritage Services under the Economy & Growth Directorate of Bath & North East Somerset Council. Heritage Services' statement of purpose is 'For learning, inspiration and enjoyment', which informs its aims:

- to enhance the quality of life for residents of Bath & North East Somerset
- to maximise public enjoyment of the Council's world class heritage
- to enable people to learn from the activities and achievements of past and present societies
- to promote understanding and appreciation of different cultures
- to contribute to the district's economic prosperity through our Business Plan

## 2. PURPOSE

2.1 This policy outlines the information that BRO will gather and provide about its collections. It also describes the current cataloguing systems and professional standards used. It supports our Mission Statement and should be read in conjunction with the Forward Plan, Collections Management Policy, Collections Development Policy, Heritage Services Research Framework and other relevant policy documents. The policy directly informs our Collections Information Plan.

## 3. OVERVIEW

3.1 BRO recognises that maintaining accurate and appropriate information about the records in its care is essential to promote efficient collections management and to improve public access.

3.2 BRO captures information at various stages during the processing of new records from their point of deposit through to accessioning, cataloguing and subsequent use, and in accordance with developing legislation.

3.3 This policy covers information gathered:

- at the point of deposit or transfer
- during accessioning
- during cataloguing
- through location and movement control
- about demand, usage and disposal
- through research on these or other collections
- about physical condition, preservation and conservation activities

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

- deposit agreement or transfer documentation
- accessions correspondence files, which are used to supplement the information found in accession and catalogue records
- the accessions register
- CALM database including the accessions, depositors, and catalogue databases
- Symphony LMS database
- document request slips
- other finding aids and databases, including summary and research guides

3.5 BRO will take steps to record the information required to ensure digital materials are preserved and can be retrieved and used. The acquisition of digital records is managed through specific workflows and procedures, supported by associated plans and strategies.

## 4. ACQUISITIONS

4.1 BRO will only acquire records that fall within the terms of its Collection Development Policy.

4.2 Records may be acquired by deposit, gift, transfer or purchase.

4.3 Surrogates of records, in analogue or digital format, may be acquired if the owner does not wish to deposit or donate the original items.

4.4 Each depositor and donor is provided with a receipt signed by staff giving summary information about their deposit and a formal agreement giving the terms of deposit or gift.

4.5 Deposit agreements record the legal status of collections, including ownership and access to the collection. One copy is kept by the depositor; the other is retained permanently by BRO as evidence of title.

4.6 Depositors and donors of digital records are asked to provide supporting technical information if possible and confirm that records can be copied and migrated for preservation purposes.

4.7 Digital records, digitised copies and analogue media will be assessed for their preservation needs and migrated to a more suitable format and storage medium as required. Copies are also made for preservation purposes and public access.

4.8 Further work is required to develop plans for a digital repository and procedures for processing digital records. For further information please refer to the Digital Preservation Policy below.

4.9 BRO seeks to retain ongoing contact with depositors to ensure that information on the ownership and provenance of collections is up to date.

## 5. ACCESSIONING

5.1 Staff follow written procedures for taking in and accessioning new deposits or donations which includes administering formal documentation, retention of information, recording accessions in CALM and the accessions register.

5.2 All archives deposits, donations and transfers are allocated a unique sequential accession number. These numbers are subsequently linked to catalogue references for traceability. Accruals are allocated the same reference number as the initial deposit but with the addition of a sequential letter.

5.3 The Accessions database on CALM is used to record every archives deposit in addition to hard-copy Accessions Registers. The CALM Accessions database has been updated to include all accessions in the Accessions Register. The Accessions database runs in parallel with the Depositors database.

5.4 Information captured and recorded on the Accessions database includes:

- Date of deposit or donation
- Name and contact details of depositor(s) or donor(s)
- Accession number, title and summary description of deposit
- Extent of deposit
- Approximate creation dates of deposit
- Accession category (Donation, Deposit, Purchase, Transfer etc.)
- Access restrictions
- Administrative and custodial history where known
- Copyright information

5.5 Recording a good level of detail for every accession will enable access to collections which have not been fully catalogued.

5.6 BRO contributes to The National Archives' annual Accessions to Repositories returns, enabling up-to-date information to appear on the Discovery database.

5.7 There is a small backlog of acquisitions waiting to be accessioned. This is prioritised under core Collections Manager hours and during Collections Weeks – closure periods normally twice a year when staff are able to focus entirely on collections management tasks.

## **6. CATALOGUING AND INDEXING (including accruals)**

6.1 Archives collections are catalogued on the CALM database. All cataloguing conforms to current professional standards including the principles and mandatory elements of the General International Standard of Archival Description [ISAD(G)]. Most draft catalogues are compiled using MS Excel.

6.2 Detailed catalogues depart from ISAD(G) guidelines notably in a deliberate repetition of information if and when this enables each catalogue entry to be intelligible to the reader when viewed in isolation.

6.3 Local Studies published material is catalogued on the Symphony LMS database. All cataloguing conforms to the current professional standards including AACR2, MARC21, DCRM(B) and DCRM(M), and the Dewey Decimal Classification. Manuscript material and other collections which are considered to be archival will be integrated into the CALM database.

6.4 New accessions which are relatively small are catalogued within 6 months. Larger accessions are catalogued within 12 months.

6.5 Large collections under the current backlog are catalogued as part of grant-funded projects or during collections weeks. Volunteers also support our cataloguing work and carry out many projects to enhance collections information such as indexing, transcription and adding to databases.

6.6 Cataloguing priorities and resourcing forms part of the Collections Information Plan which is frequently updated and reviewed by all staff. BRO will determine cataloguing prioritization for larger collections using a methodology to calculate cataloguing time and provide a rationale for decisions, based on anticipated demand, physical condition, size and complexity and significance.

6.7 Completed catalogues are added to the online catalogue, hosted by South West Heritage Trust or to the LibrariesWest catalogue (Symphony) in the case of Local Studies collections.

6.8 Digital collections are catalogued at a minimum to series level. Records are catalogued in accordance with ISAD(G) as much as possible with some adaptation in terms of metadata description. We will continue to review our procedures for cataloguing digital collections with reference to developing national and international standards and guidelines.

## **7. SUMMARY GUIDES AND DATABASES**

7.1 BRO produces detailed summary guides for distinct collections, subject-based resource guides and research guides which are produced in print and downloadable PDF formats. These greatly enhance accessibility to uncatalogued collections.

7.2 BRO maintains a number of databases and resources which enable and support access to collections. These include Bath Ancestors, Bath Burial Index and Georgian Newspaper Project, as well as Bath in Time. These are constantly updated and promoted.

## **8. MOVEMENT CONTROL, INCLUDING LOANS**

8.1 The production of a document is recorded on an Item Request Slip, which records when the item was produced and the name of the researcher or member of staff who was consulting it.

8.2 Item Request Slips are used to inform those retrieving documents that the item(s) has been temporarily withdrawn. They are also used to compile monthly statistics which record how many items have been requested and consulted.

8.3 BRO allows depositors to withdraw their records and a record is kept via the loans database and additional paperwork if necessary.

8.4 External loans are documented using a loan request form and are added to the loans database. Internal loans are tracked using databases specific to each department. Item Request Slips are used for all loans.

## **9. APPRAISAL, DISPOSALS AND PERMANENT WITHDRAWALS**

9.1 At the point of deposit, BRO captures any permission given by the depositor for records to be destroyed or transferred to another archive if the records fall outside the Collection Development Policy. BRO also offers to return to the depositor any records falling outside the Collection Development Policy.

9.2 BRO reserves the right to review archives in its custody and to recommend their transfer, disposal or destruction provided that this complies with the Collections Development Policy and that all relevant consents have been obtained.

9.3 All permanent disposals or withdrawals of archives are recorded in CALM and any hard-copy catalogues available for public consultation are updated. Local Studies disposals are recorded on spreadsheets and the relevant catalogue entry or index card is updated.

## 10. REVIEW

10.1 This policy will be reviewed every 3 years or earlier if necessary, to take into account any changed circumstances.

## VERSION CONTROL

Version	Date	Detail
1.0	29/04/2020	Succeeds previous Bath Record Office Collections Information Policy drafted in 2017
1.1	09/11/2020	Reworked for Cabinet member approval. Decision made 20/11/2020