

Bath Record Office: Archives and Local Studies **Collections Management Policy**

1. POLICY FRAMEWORK

Council Corporate Strategy

1.1 The Council's Corporate Strategy priorities aim to Improve People's Lives by:

- Addressing the climate emergency
- Preparing for the future
- Delivering for local residents
- Focusing on prevention
- Giving people a bigger say

1.2 BRO seeks to align all of its activities with these priorities.

Heritage Services' Service and Business Aims

1.3 BRO forms part of Heritage Services under the Economy & Growth Directorate of Bath & North East Somerset Council. The Heritage Services' Service Aims are to:

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

1.4 To achieve these Service Aims we:

- Protect and develop the Council's unique historic collections and public buildings
- Plan for and invest in their sustainability
- Interpret them through displays, study facilities, learning programmes and special events
- Mount the best available exhibitions from other regional and national collections
- Sell high quality merchandise to complement our services
- Hire out historic venues for a wide range of events and activities
- Train and develop our staff to realise their full potential
- Consult widely with users and stakeholders on an ongoing basis
- Use information technology in accessible and imaginative ways
- Work in partnership with others wherever appropriate

1.5 Heritage Services' Business Aims are for ongoing sustainability in three equally important and inter-dependent activities:

- Conservation: preserving our heritage for present and future generations to enjoy
- Customer Care: meeting the needs of all our audiences, customers and guests
- Commercial Success: – maintaining our positive contribution to the Council's budget

1.6 To achieve these Business Aims, equal attention is devoted to these three core activities.

The BRO Mission Statement and Purpose

1.7 **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.

1.8 **Purpose:** the purpose of the Collections Management Policy is to outline how BRO currently fulfil its Mission Statement through its management of collections, and how it aims to improve their management in the future. The Policy is supported by complementary policies for Collections Development, Care and Conservation, Access and Engagement, Collections Information, and Volunteering.

Statutory and Legal Status

1.9 BRO 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).

1.10 BRO 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.

1.11 Access to the collections operates within a legislative framework which includes the Freedom of Information Act 2000, Representation of the People Act 2002 and Data Protection Act 2018. These Acts apply to the collections we hold and place restrictions and requirements on the access we can provide. We operate within the Council's policies and procedures for Data Protection and Freedom of Information enquiries.

National Standards

1.12 This policy has been drawn up to comply with the Archives Accreditation Standard (2018, TNA) and the Standard for Access to Archives (Public Services Quality Group for Archives, 2008).

Definitions

1.13 **Archives** are the record of everyday activities of, organisations and individuals and may be in any format. They are preserved permanently because of their evidential and historical value.

1.14 **Local studies resources** comprise mainly published information about the history of local areas, their communities, and their contexts which may include books, newspapers, maps, pamphlets, images, ephemera and journals covering a wide range of topics.

1.15 **Public Records** are defined by the Public Records Acts of 1958 and 1967. They include records created by coroners, magistrates' and other courts, prisons and health authorities.

2. SCOPE AND SUMMARY OF COLLECTIONS

2.1 **The Collections Management Policy** covers both the archives and local studies collections which were managed separately until 2017. The policy covers all aspects of collections management and aims to determine how the combined collections are integrated in order to ensure a consistent and coordinated approach to the management of collections. For further details relating to specific areas of collections management, please refer to the relevant policy section below.

2.2 **The Archives Collections** chiefly comprise the records of Bath City Council and, since 1996, Bath & North East Somerset Council, from 1189 to the present day. As a Place of Deposit, BRO holds Public Records which include records of courts, hospitals, approved schools and a number of other classes of records. In addition, many collections are held on deposit from businesses, charities, clubs and societies, and parish councils. Additionally, many collections are donated by private individuals and organisations if they fall within the collecting policy. Since 2005, the Archives have held the status of Designated Collection of outstanding national / international importance with Arts Council England (ACE).

The Archives collections are cited as the bedrock of knowledge about the City of Bath UNESCO World Heritage Site (WHS) in the WHS Management Plan.

2.3 **The Local Studies Collections** originated with donations of material to Bath City Council in the nineteenth century and have grown, mainly through private donations or purchasing, to incorporate a wide range of material. The core of this material is printed books on various subjects of local interest to the City of Bath and its hinterland, and its context within the wider scope of national and international history. Manuscripts, maps, newspapers, scrapbooks, ephemera, pamphlets and images are also well-represented. The collection incorporates special collections material covering specific subjects, often gifted by local residents which are important to the general history of publishing and book production and enhance the context and understanding of the collections in general. These include early modern books; bindings and special presses of local, national and international significance.

3. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1 BRO is managed by the **Principal Archivist** (1.0FTE), reporting to the Head of Heritage Services. The Principal Archivist sits on the Heritage Services Management Team and the Public Services Team within Heritage Services. There are 5 FTE staff in the team, not including project staff and volunteers. Overall accountability for archives and local studies lies with the Head of Heritage Services who reports to the Director of Economy and Growth.

3.2 The Principal Archivist is supported by **Collections Managers** (1.5FTE) who have responsibility for a wide range of collections management duties, volunteer coordination and supervision, as well as providing professional support in the search room on a rota

basis. Collections Managers also play a vital role in acquisitions and disposals and the development of digital preservation for the service.

3.3 The **Local Studies Librarian** (1.0FTE) has a large degree of autonomy in the management of the local studies collections in terms of priorities and projects and line manages the **Assistant Local Studies Librarian** (0.5FTE) as well as supervising a number of volunteers. Both members of staff provide support in the search room on a rota basis, including responding to remote enquiries.

3.4 The **Archives Assistant** (1.0FTE) delivers the public search room service, advising visitors on the collections and their relevance to their research, and producing archives as required. They also answer written enquiries and provide copies of documents requested by researchers. When closed to the public on Mondays, the Archives Assistant carries out basic listing of collections and strong room cleaning/inspections.

3.5 Outreach and engagement are mainly managed by the Principal Archivist and Local Studies Librarian with support from all other staff in its delivery. Heritage Services' Learning and Participation Team also provide valuable support.

3.6 BRO is supported by a team of c.25 **Volunteers** who work on both archives and local studies projects as well as some grant-funded projects. Our volunteers can vary from people with an interest in history, a desire to help BRO in its work or an interest in pursuing a career in archives. BRO will ensure that established internal procedures are used in terms of recruitment of and support to those volunteers.

3.7 Facilities management is the responsibility of Heritage Services Facilities Manager with onsite security provided by Guildhall Maintenance Team.

4. COLLECTIONS DEVELOPMENT

4.1 BRO will maintain a Collections Development Policy which includes:

- The basis on which archives and local studies are acquired and disposed of.
- The rationale for the appraisal of collections either at the time of acquisition or retrospectively.
- Details of the legal framework within which Bath Record Office operates.
- The methods by which we will continue to actively develop our collecting strategy through partnerships, relationship-building and liaison.

4.2 BRO will only accept material which it has the resources to care for in the long term.

4.3 A robust and transparent criterion for disposal must be established before consideration is given to the disposal of any items in the collections. Items for disposal will be offered in the first instance to other Accredited repositories or libraries.

4.4 There is a strong presumption against later disposal or deaccessioning of material that has been accessioned by the Service. However, it is noted that the service holds a number of legacy collections which were not subject to current appraisal principles and processes. BRO reserves the right to conduct a retrospective appraisal exercise, including consultation

with relevant third parties or depositors, to determine whether these collections meet the principles identified in the Collections Development Policy.

4.5 BRO will maintain close and active relationships with official bodies and internal Council departments, particularly Records Management and Bath Central Library to ensure the timely transfer of records.

4.6 The Collections Development Policy and Deposit Agreement will be reviewed every 5 years in consultation with stakeholders and Heritage Services Public Services Team.

5. COLLECTIONS INFORMATION

5.1 BRO maintains a **Collections Information Policy**, with particular focus on rationalising procedures and workflows between the archives and local studies collections.

5.2 BRO uses both the CALM archival management system (Archives), and Symphony cataloguing software (Local Studies).

5.3 Procedures for accessioning and cataloguing archives collections are devised and maintained by the Principal Archivist and Collections Managers. These follow the principles of current archival standards for cataloguing and indexing: ISAD(G), NCA Name Authority Guidelines, ISAAR (CPF) and the UNESCO subject thesaurus.

5.4 Procedures for accessioning and cataloguing the local studies collections are devised and maintained by the Local Studies Librarian and Assistant Local Studies Librarian. These follow the principles in the standards for library cataloguing in AACR2, MARC21, DCRM(B), DCRM(M), Library of Congress Name Authorities and Subject Headings.

5.5 All accessions (deposits, donations, purchases and transfers) will be recorded and given a unique number on the accessions database on CALM or catalogued directly into Symphony Workflows. The accession will be recorded in the hard-copy accessions register and given a location reference. Accession records should contain a good level of detail so that they are accessible to researchers before they are fully catalogued.

5.6 Cataloguing priorities will be decided by the Principal Archivist, Local Studies Librarian and Collections Managers and will feed into strategic planning for future grant applications.

5.7 Collections Information plans are constantly reviewed by the Principal Archivist, Local Studies Librarian and Collections Managers and are in the form of spreadsheets which identify quantities, complexity and resourcing.

5.8 Catalogues will be made publicly available via the Somerset Archives online catalogue hosted by South West Heritage Trust, and LibrariesWest catalogue. Indices and catalogues in hard-copy format are also accessible in the search room.

5.9 Collections information is also available via The National Archives Discovery database and we also host a number of extensive databases including Bath Ancestors, Bath Burial Index and Georgian Newspaper Project.

5.10 Partnership opportunities which may enable new ways to share knowledge of the collections will be developed (from within Heritage Services, the Archives South West network, nationally and internationally), with a particular focus on born-digital and digitised collections.

6. ACCESS

6.1 Intellectual and physical access to the collections should be balanced with issues of security, copyright, data protection, and preservation of material.

6.2 Access to collections is primarily provided in the search room. Exhibitions (both physical and online), publications, strong room tours, events, talks, and learning and engagement activities are other examples of how we provide a variety of ways to access the collections.

6.3 BRO strives to widen access as much as possible through its Access & Engagement Policy and plans. It works closely with Heritage Services' Learning and Participation Team to achieve this.

7. COLLECTIONS CARE AND CONSERVATION

7.1 Conservation is one of three core Business Plan aims for Heritage Services. We aim to preserve our heritage for present and future generations to enjoy.

7.2 BRO maintains a Collections Care and Conservation policy which outlines how our collections are cared for.

7.3 Collections Care and Conservation plans are constantly reviewed by the Principal Archivist, Local Studies Librarian and Collections Managers and are in the form of spreadsheets which identify priorities and resourcing.

7.4 Staff and volunteers will follow strict preventative conservation procedures which will be regularly reviewed by the Principal Archivist in consultation with conservation professionals.

8. DIGITAL PRESERVATION

8.1 Heritage Services is developing a Digital Preservation Policy which affirms its commitment to address the challenges surrounding the management, preservation and accessibility of its digital assets.

8.2 BRO acquires born-digital records and digital surrogates provided that these complement existing holdings and provided that the original document is unavailable for acquisition.

8.3 Digital records are subject to the same principles and procedures regarding accessioning, access restrictions, and collecting priorities as analogue records.

8.4 BRO seeks to work collaboratively with partners (both internal and external) with similar aims in order to develop an infrastructure, policies and procedures in this area of expertise.

8.5 BRO encourages and enables staff to undertake training and development so that its service has the necessary skills and expertise in order to increase our understanding of digital preservation tools and techniques.

9. LOANS

9.1 Lending material to other archives, libraries and museums and galleries is an important way to widen access to the BRO collections. However, this must be balanced with robust loan agreements and conditions in order to ensure the safety of collections.

9.2 Requests to loan items for exhibition by a third party are considered on a case by case basis and will only be agreed provided satisfactory arrangements are in place with respect to security, environmental conditions, insurance and transport.

9.3 Third parties requesting loans from BRO must sign a loans agreement and complete the necessary paperwork.

9.4 Depositors requesting to loan their own material from BRO must abide by the deposit agreement.

10. SECURITY

10.1 Overall physical security of the public search rooms and strong rooms in the Guildhall is largely the responsibility of the Principal Archivist. The Principal Archivist regularly liaises with the Guildhall Maintenance team to ensure procedures are in place and adhered to. The overall security of the Guildhall is managed by Property Services.

10.2 Security of off-site stores at Haydon and Pixash Lane, where Local Studies material is held, is the responsibility of the Principal Archivist and Local Studies Librarian in liaison with One West and Waste Services respectively.

10.3 Systems such as intruder alarms, CCTV, fire and flood detection will be subject to a regular programme of maintenance.

10.4 Staff and volunteers must adhere to relevant procedures when accessing strong rooms and restricted areas.

10.5 Access to strong rooms, including keys and security codes, will be restricted to BRO staff, volunteers under supervision and other authorised personnel only. Arrangements are in place for managing external contractors whilst working in restricted areas.

11. EMERGENCY PLANNING

11.1 BRO maintains a Disaster Plan which is regularly updated by the Principal Archivist in consultation with Heritage Services staff and other relevant contacts. The plan recognises the archive collections as core assets of the service and sets out procedures to minimise damage to the collections and buildings, and to maintain security at times of emergency.

11.2 Stock to be used in times of emergency is maintained at the Guildhall which includes conservation resources and materials. Additional stock is maintained at other Heritage Services sites.

12. REVIEW

12.1 The policy will be reviewed every 3 years.

VERSION CONTROL

Version	Date	Detail
1.0	24/04/2020	Succeeds previous Bath Record Office Collections Management Policy drafted in 2018
1.1	09/11/2020	Reworked for Cabinet member approval. Decision made 20/11/2020