



Durham County Record Office

# Collecting Policy 2021 to 2024

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## **Collecting Policy**

### **1. Purpose**

- 1.1 Our Collecting Policy exists to explain how and why Durham County Record Office (DCRO) selects and preserves archives and publications. We collect archives and local and family history resources to ensure they are kept safe, now and for the future, and made available for research. Our Collecting Policy should be read alongside our other policies, in particular our Collections Development Policy, Appraisals Policy and Deaccessioning Policy.

### **2. Context**

- 2.1 Durham County Record Office is the statutory local authority archive service for County Durham. We also act under agreement as the archive authority for Darlington Borough Council and as the Durham Diocesan Record Office for Parish Records. DCRO is an Accredited Archive Service, appointed as a place of deposit for public records by The National Archives.
- 2.2 Our mission statement:
- Durham County Record Office collects, conserves, secures and makes accessible historical records relating to County Durham and Darlington to enable learning and education, business operations, local accountability, and personal enrichment.
- 2.3 Statutory Position: the archive service is provided under a number of pieces of legislation, details of which can be seen at Appendix 1.
- 2.4 The archives in our care comprise over five miles of locally, regionally, nationally and internationally significant archives, providing a unique insight into the history and heritage of County Durham and Darlington over the last 900 years. See Appendix 2 for further details of the types of records we hold.

### **3. Scope**

- 3.1 This policy applies to records in all formats, both analogue and digital, relating to the administrative County of Durham as at 1 April 1997 and to the Borough of Darlington as at 1 April 1997: Durham County Council and Darlington Borough Council corporate records and records accepted by us as archives from other organisations or individuals.
- 3.2 DCRO collects Church of England parish records from the Diocese of Durham and from parishes within the Diocese of Ripon that lie within the administrative County of Durham.
- 3.3 Where the principal focus of the collection falls within the administrative County of Durham or Borough of Darlington, the Record Office will accept archives that relate to other areas.

3.4 DCRO will continue to preserve archives relating to the historic county that were acquired before 1974.

3.5 For the purposes of this policy, archives are defined as:

Materials created or received by a person, family or organisation, public or private, in the conduct of their affairs and preserved because of the enduring value contained in them or as evidence of the functions and responsibilities of their creator, especially those materials maintained using the principles of provenance, original order and collective control; permanent records (Society of American Archivists).

A group of records created by an organisation or individual in the course of daily activities but no longer needed by them for regular reference. The individual records in an archive can vary in format but each is a combination of a medium and the information recorded on or in it; for example single sheets of paper with typed or handwritten text, maps, bound volumes, photographic negatives and prints, audio-visual recordings and digital documents/files.

Records are defined as including, but not restricted to, manuscripts, typescripts, maps, plans, drawings, photographs, digital records, sound and moving image recordings, printed works and any other formats that form an archive, or an integral part of an archive, of an organisation or individual.

A broad policy cannot cover all eventualities and the County Archivist will have discretion to exercise judgement on the historical and informational significance of records offered to DCRO.

3.6 Public records are defined by the Public Records Act 1958 and include records created by coroners, magistrates courts, prisons, health authorities and nationalised industries. Public records, by law, have to be transferred to an approved place of deposit, and by 2022 transfers will be made once the records are 20-years old.

3.7 Local and family history resources comprise published information about the history of local areas and their communities, such as books, pamphlets and journals with relevance to the history of County Durham and Darlington, covering a wide variety of topics.

## **4. Policy Principles**

4.1 Archives are accepted as a gift, 'in lieu' or on long-term loan. In exceptional circumstances, records may be purchased. It is a condition of acceptance that documents will be available for public access either immediately or at the expiry of a specified period. The Record Office reserves the right to require from the Depositor a payment reflecting the financial costs involved in storage, cataloguing and conservation of deposited records that are subsequently withdrawn.

4.2 Archives are selected for permanent preservation by professionally qualified archivists, based on their unique quality as authentic evidence of

administrative, cultural and intellectual activities and as a reflection of the evolution of society. All appropriate records are accepted regardless of age.

- 4.3 Durham County Council and Darlington Borough Council archives are selected in line with the Councils' Records Management policies and following current best practice guidelines, for example the Records Management Society Local Government Classification Retention Scheme.
- 4.4 The Record Office will not normally accept artefacts, which will be directed to the appropriate museum.
- 4.5 In deciding whether to accept records, DCRO will take into account the reasonable collecting policies of other established archive repositories, including (but not limited to) Tyne and Wear Archives, Teesside Archives, the North East Film Archive, Durham University Archives and Special Collections and The National Archives. We will not seek to acquire records which would more suitably be held elsewhere.
- 4.6 Disposal  
Records deemed by professionally qualified archivists not to be worthy of permanent preservation will be disposed of by agreement with the donor/depositor. Records will either be returned or will be disposed of in a confidential manner.

Records deemed by professionally qualified archivists to be more suitably kept by an alternative archive repository will be transferred there following consultation with the donor/depositor.

Where owners cannot reasonably be traced records will be presumed to have been gifted to DCRO.

## **5. Standards**

- 5.1 See Appendix 1 for statutory position.
- 5.2 Our Terms of Deposit can be found on our website:  
[http://www.durhamrecordoffice.org.uk/media/16540/Durham-County-Record-Office-loan-agreement/pdf/DCRO\\_Loan\\_Agreement.pdf](http://www.durhamrecordoffice.org.uk/media/16540/Durham-County-Record-Office-loan-agreement/pdf/DCRO_Loan_Agreement.pdf)
- 5.3 The national government policy on archives can be found at  
<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/archives/Archives-Unlocked-Accessibility-Version.pdf>

## **6. Roles and responsibilities**

- 6.1 DCC Corporate Management Team is responsible for approving the corporate framework for the preservation of and access to archival records as set out in this policy.
- 6.2 DCC Corporate Directors are responsible for developing service guidance for the preservation of and access to archival records.

- 6.3 DCC Heads of Services are responsible for ensuring that appropriate resources are in place to enable compliance with the Collecting Policy.
- 6.4 Individual Employees are responsible for the records they create and will follow service guidance for the preservation of and access to archival records. DCC owns the information that individual employees create.
- 6.5 The County Archivist is responsible for DCRO's Collecting Policy, and will provide guidance and support to services and elected members in order to support its aims.
- 6.6 The Collecting Policy will apply to records created by elected members as part of their Council work.

## **7. Communication**

- 7.1 The Collecting Policy will be published on the DCRO website.

## **8. Audit**

- 8.1 DCRO will develop procedures to enable the effective monitoring of the Collecting Policy.

## **9. Risk Management**

- 9.1 Without a policy and procedures for collecting archives and publications, there are a series of risks:
- Disposing of significant archives, irretrievable loss of historically important records.
  - Damage to historically important records.

## **10. Review**

We will review this policy every three years.

## **11. Contacts**

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## **Appendix 1: Statutory Position and Standards**

Durham County Council has a statutory duty to provide an archives service, to preserve and make accessible archives in whatever format they may be created. Relevant legislation:

### **Public Records Act 1958**

Durham County Record Office is appointed by the Lord Chancellor as a place of deposit for public records under this Act. Records have to be kept under proper conditions and reasonable access by the public has to be provided. The National Archives inspects places of deposit to ensure they comply. Public records include court records, coroners' records, hospital records and NCB records.

### **The Law of Property (Amendment) Act 1924**

### **The Manorial Documents Rules 1926**

### **The Tithe (Copies of Instruments of Appropriation) Rules 1960**

### **Local Government (Records) Act 1962**

### **Local Government Act 1972**

This Act requires local authorities to 'make proper arrangements with respect to any documents that belong to or are in the custody of the Council or any of their officers'. In 1999, the Department for Environment, Transport and the Regions issued guidance as to what was meant by 'proper arrangements'. The guidance established that records included:

- those created by the authority and its predecessors in the course of its business
- public records
- records given to or purchased by the authority, or on indefinite loan

Proper arrangements for the care of these records should include:

- storage conditions to BS 4971:2017, and to include expansion space
- preservation/conservation arrangements (packaging/handling/surrogates/conservation work)
- public access under supervision, requiring suitable space and staff
- an education and outreach service to realise the educational potential of archives and offer lifelong learning opportunities
- employment of qualified staff to keep the records safe and make them available for public inspection; to advise the authority and record owners on the care of their archives; to provide catalogues and other finding aids; to preserve and conserve the archives

### **Parochial Registers and Records Measure 1978**

This measure governs the inspection and care of parish records. Under this Measure:

- parish records have to be inspected once every 5 years
- records over 100 years old must be transferred to the appointed place of deposit, unless stringent storage conditions are met in the parish.

The Diocese of Durham has appointed Durham County Record Office as the place of deposit for its parish records

- records that are retained in the parish must be stored in suitable storage conditions

### **Freedom of Information Act 2000**

### **Environmental Information Regulations Act 2004**

### **Data Protection Act 2018**

Standards that are relevant to the management of all archives:

- Archive Service Accreditation Standard 2013
- British Standard for archive storage BS 4971:2017
- Information and Records Management Society Retention guidelines for Local Authorities 2003

## **Appendix 2: Our archive collections**

The archive collections comprise:

- Records of Durham County Council and its predecessor authorities
- Records of Darlington Borough Council and its predecessor authorities
- Records of District, Parish and Town Councils and other local authorities in County Durham and Darlington
- Public records, including coroners, magistrates courts, prisons, health authorities and nationalised industries
- Parish and non-conformist church records
- Education records
- The Durham Light Infantry archives
- Estate and Family records
- Business and Industry records
- Trade Union and Employers' Association records
- Charity and Society records
- Maps and plans
- Local history collections
- Photographs
- Newspapers
- Letters, diaries, etc. of individuals and families