



Durham County Record Office

Collections Management Policy 2021 to 2024

Author	Owner	Approval body
Liz Bregazzi, County Archivist	Liz Bregazzi, County Archivist	Head of Transformation

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Collections Management Policy

1. Purpose

- 1.1 Our collections management policy, and the suite of related collections policies, exists to define how and why we acquire, preserve, develop and facilitate access to the collections in our care.
- 1.2 It exists to ensure that risks to collections are assessed and, if necessary, removed or mitigated. To achieve this, we have developed and implemented specific collection care standards to support and maintain our collections. It should be read alongside our other policies, in particular our Archive Collecting Policy, Access Policy and Collections Care and Conservation Policy.
- 1.3 It serves as a guide for staff and demonstrates to external organisations and individuals that Durham County Record Office (DCRO) has adopted recognised professional standards and aims to follow good practice.

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 and 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.

3. Scope

- .1 This policy applies to all records managed by our service both analogue and digital: Durham County Council and Darlington Borough Council corporate records, and records offered to us as archives by other organisations or individuals.

4. Policy Principles

- 4.1 'Archives are the record of the everyday activities of governments, organisations, businesses and individuals. They are central to the record of our national and local stories and are vital in creating cultural heritage and

supporting public policy objectives. Their preservation ensures that future generations will be able to learn from the experiences of the past to make decisions about the present and the future' (Archives for the 21st Century, 2009).

- 4.2 'Archives sit at the heart of our collective understanding: who we are, where we came from, and, indeed, where we are going...In short: Archives Matter' (Archives Unlocked 2017).
- 4.3 We preserve archives because of the enduring value of the information they contain or as evidence of the functions and responsibilities of their creator. This important evidential role of archives supports research and the operational efficiency of organisations. What we preserve is unique and therefore irreplaceable.
- 4.4 We undertake the collection, preservation and provision of access to archives following professional principles and ethical guidance.
- 4.5 Collections management requires a long-term and consistent commitment of resources, not only to enable the interpretation of and access to the information contained in the collections, but also to ensure that that information survives unaltered into the future.
- 4.6 Collections management is a complex activity and needs to be underpinned by guidance; both to staff and users, on how best to use and at the same time protect the carriers of the information, the formats themselves. This guidance is best expressed via a suite of policies which address the risks to the collections at all levels of their management and use.

5. Policy requirements

- 5.1 Our collections management policy framework consists of the following strategic policies:
 - Archive collecting policy
 - Access policy
 - Collections care and conservation policy
- 5.2 Our archive collecting policy includes:
 - a definition of archives
 - our statutory position and purpose
 - scope and limitations, geographical extent
 - terms on which we accept collections
 - our selection criteria
 - our disposal policy
- 5.3 Our access policy includes:
 - access in person
 - remote access via enquiry service

- remote access via website
- interpretation
- education
- community involvement
- access restrictions

5.4 Our collections care and conservation policy includes:

- fire detection and prevention
- security
- environmental control and monitoring
- housekeeping
- pest monitoring
- packaging and storage
- records in transit
- remedial conservation
- access and handling
- disaster planning

6. Standards

6.1 See Appendix 1 for statutory position.

6.2 The policy is underpinned by:

- the British Standards Institution Code of practice for cultural collections management PAS 197:2009
- the requirements of the Archive Service Accreditation Standard, 2013
- and the current government policies on archives, Archives for the 21st Century 2009 and Archives Unlocked 2017.

7. Roles and responsibilities

7.1 DCC Corporate Management Team is responsible for approving the corporate framework for the preservation of semi-current and archival records as set out in this policy.

7.2 DCC Corporate Directors are responsible for developing service guidance for the preservation of semi-current and archival records.

7.3 DCC Heads of Services are responsible for ensuring that appropriate resources are in place to enable compliance with the Collections Management Policy.

7.4 Individual Employees are responsible for the records they create and will follow service guidance for the preservation of semi-current and archival records. DCC owns the information that individual employees create.

7.5 The County Archivist is responsible for DCRO's Collections Management Policy, and will provide guidance and support to services and elected members in order to support its aims.

7.6 The Collections Management Policy will apply to records created by Elected Members as part of their Council work.

8. Communication

8.1 The Collections Management Policy will be published on the DCRO website.

9. Audit

9.1 DCRO will develop procedures to enable the effective monitoring of the Collections Management Policy.

10. Risk Management

10.1 Without a policy and procedures for collections management, there are a series of risks:

- Disposing of significant archives, irretrievable loss of historically important records.
- Attracting bad publicity and creating poor public relations and damage to reputation.
- Trust. Archive services that do not manage the care of and access to their collections efficiently and ethically risk losing the support of their community. This community includes a range of stakeholders including users, depositors and funders.

11. Review

We will review this policy every three years.

12. Contacts

Liz Bregazzi, County Archivist, Durham County Record Office, County Hall, Durham, DH1 5UL. Tel: (03000) 267619. E-mail: record.office@durham.gov.uk

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
- Local Government (Records) Act 1962
- Local Government Act 1972
- Data Protection Act 1998
- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- Environmental Information Regulations Act 2004
- Parochial Registers and Records Measure 1978
- The Law of Property (Amendment) Act 1924
- The Manorial Documents Rules 1926
- The Tithe (Copies of Instruments of Appropriation) Rules 1960

Standards play an important role in appraisal. 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