

Library of Birmingham Birmingham Archives & Collections Collections Development Policy



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Introduction

Birmingham Archives & Collections is the professional archives service for Birmingham City Council and maintains a repository for the storage and custody of its own records and any records deposited with it.

All records received are held for the benefit of the public.

Alongside the core activities of customer service and developing collections Archives & Collections at the Library of Birmingham – makes important contributions to the city in areas such as skills and employability, community engagement, health and wellbeing, and tourism.

Birmingham Archives & Collections play an important role in communities and organisations to support and develop: Learning and skills, Health and wellbeing, Economic prosperity, and Creativity.

Archive collections enrich our understanding of the present through an appreciation of the past. They connect us to our families, our homes and the places where we live and work. They foster and promote a sense of place and community.

As the archives and collections Service for the City of Birmingham we are committed to making the unique and precious collections - written and digital, images, maps, film and other media – accessible and relevant to everyone.

Birmingham Archives & Collections continues to collect documents, in all forms, that will tell the story of today for people in the future. To make this possible, we ensure that significant records, whether in traditional or digital format are:

- actively collected and described
- are preserved for future generations
- are accessible and set in a context that helps customers understand them

as well as fulfilling their valuable role in providing evidence for legal and other official purposes.

Scope of the Policy

This policy covers the acquisition and disposal of archival material by Birmingham Archives & Collections. It does not cover the acquisition of published material to the local studies collection or other Special Collections that exist in Library of Birmingham, such as the Shakespeare Collection or Early Fine Printing Collection.

Archives may be records of any date which have been created or accumulated by an individual or organisation in the course of their activities. They may be in a variety of different formats including paper, parchment, audio-visual, photographic or electronic media.

Relevant policies

This policy should be seen in context with the following:

- Collections Management Policy
- Collections Information Policy
- Collections Development Plan

- Access Policy
- Exhibition and Loan Policy
- Digital Preservation Plan
- Digitisation Standards
- Conservation and Preservation Policy
- Collection Care and Conservation Plan

Legislation and Standards

Birmingham Archives & Collections operates under the following pieces of legislation which impact on the acquisition of archival material:

- Public Records Acts 1958, 1967
- Parochial Registers and Records Measures 1978, amended 1992
- Manorial Documents Rules 1959 and 1967
- Local Government Acts 1972 and 1985
- Education Reform Act 1988
- Manorial Documents Rules 1960
- Tithe Act 1936/Tithe Apportionment Rules 1960 and 1963
- Local Government (Records) Act (1962)-
- Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010

Standards

Birmingham Archives & Collections has adopted the following standards which must be met for certain classes of archives to be acquired:

- National Standard for Access to Archives 2003
- PD 5454:2012 Recommendations for the storage and exhibition of archival documents

Birmingham Archives & Collections will also follow best practice guidance on the acquisition of new material including guidance from The National Archives and the Archives and Records Association.

Acquisition Criteria

Geographical Coverage

Birmingham Archives & Collections collects and preserves both original and printed records of historical significance relating to the City of Birmingham, its people, businesses, institutions and societies.

Birmingham Archives & Collections endeavours to acquire material representing the activities of Birmingham's diverse communities past and present. It will acquire material relating to both the historic and the modern city of Birmingham.

Where material offered relates to another location, Birmingham Archives & Collections will advise potential donors or depositors of this and liaise with other repositories to identify the most appropriate home for the material.

Appraising the value of archives

Birmingham Archives & Collections will appraise archives for their historical and evidential value before a decision is made about whether to acquire them.

Record creators

Birmingham Archives & Collections is the designated repository for a number of types of records. We are:

- The official and public archives of Birmingham City Council
- Appointed by the Lord Chancellor as the local place of deposit for certain classes of central government archives under the Public Records Acts 1958 and 1967
- Approved by the master of the rolls for the deposit of manorial documents
- Appointed by the Bishop of Birmingham as a Diocesan Record Office for diocesan and parochial records
- Empowered under the Local Government (Records) Act 1962 to accept privately owned records by way of donation, purchase or deposit

Birmingham Archives & Collections will also seek to acquire material from any creator or body which will improve the understanding of the history of the city. Birmingham Archives & Collections will endeavour to add to its collections in the following areas:

- Faith groups
- Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority individuals, businesses and groups
- LGBT individuals and groups
- Disability.
- Voluntary groups
- Charities
- Arts organisations

Material not normally accepted

Birmingham Archives & Collections will not normally accept:

- Material subject to restrictions which are too great to allow public use
- Hazardous material such as cellulose nitrate film or infested material that would pose a risk to the repository
- Archives damaged beyond repair
- Records where there is concern over legal ownership
- Published or printed material except where it forms a key part of an archive or includes important annotations (see the 'Donating to the Birmingham Collection' document for details of how we acquire Local Studies printed material)
- Material relating to an area other than Birmingham unless the material is integral to a collection or dividing it would result in loss of archival value
- Artefacts and works of art, unless there is a strong connection between the object and archive material and separating them would result in loss of archival value
- Newspapers, unless they are an integral part of a larger archive collection
- Archives which are wholly audio-visual in nature

Methods of acquisition

Birmingham Archives & Collections will acquire material in the following ways:

- **Donation:** whereby they become the outright property of Birmingham City Council including any Intellectual Property Rights
- **Deposit:** as an indefinite loan with the ownership remaining with the depositor
- **Purchase:** Records may occasionally be purchased from reputable dealers and auctioneers
- **Statutory or official transfer**

Records will be acquired from other archive services if Birmingham is deemed the most suitable repository.

Birmingham City Council records that meet the criteria for transfer to the archives in our City Council Retention Schedule are transferred from departmental records management accounts to the archive service's account. A physical appraisal of these records is periodically carried out by archive staff resulting in the records either being added to the collections or confidentially destroyed.

Birmingham Archives & Collections will issue an agreement signed by staff and the donor/depositor or seller. Birmingham Archives & Collections will preserve documentation relating to each acquisition. These records will form the legal basis for evidence of title.

Audio-visual material

We may accept audio-visual items which form an integral part of a larger archive. However, we may recommend that audio-visual items that require specialist equipment for preservation and access are held by the Media Archive for Central England.

Photographic material

Birmingham Archives & Collections will collect photographs where they form part of an archival collection or were created by a record keeping body (for example a building survey by Birmingham City Council).

Born-digital records

Birmingham Archives & Collections will collect born-digital records where the record was originally created in digital format and where the record only exists in digital format.

Printed material

Birmingham Archives & Collections will liaise with Library staff within Birmingham City Council to ensure books are directed to the most appropriate destination.

Deaccession and Disposal

Transfer of material to other repositories

Birmingham Archives & Collections will transfer archives to other repositories if their geographical coverage is better suited to another repository and users would benefit from their relocation. Approval from the donor or depositor will be sought.

Disposal of documents

Birmingham Archives & Collections will assess material at the point of acquisition and any material deemed not to be worthy of permanent preservation will be returned to the donor or depositor or destroyed confidentially in line with the donor or depositor's wishes.

Further appraisal of the records will take place at the point of cataloguing. Material not deemed suitable for permanent preservation will either be returned to the depositor or destroyed confidentially in line with the depositor or donor's wishes specified in the agreement made with the archive service.

Contact with depositors

We endeavour to keep in contact with donors and depositors as long as they advise us of any change in contact details. We offer donors and depositors the option to receive back unwanted material as long as this is specified at the point of transfer of the material to the archive.

Procedure for review

This policy document requires review every two years. The next review date is March 2019, unless circumstances dictate otherwise.