

Archives & Collections at the Library of Birmingham

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, both physical and digital, 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 plays 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 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, which 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. See also the Library of Birmingham Donation Policy that relates to published works and Appendix A.

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:

- Library of Birmingham Donation Policy

- Collections Management Policy
- Collections Information Policy
- Collections Development Plan
- Access Policy
- Access to Closed Records Policy
- Exhibition and Loan Policy
- Digital Preservation Policy
- Digital Preservation Strategy
- Digitisation Standards
- Conservation and Preservation Policy
- Collection Care and Conservation Plan
- Library of Birmingham Stock Policy

Legislation and Standards

Birmingham Archives & Collections has Accredited Archives Service status and 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
- BS 4971:2017, the British standard for the "Conservation & Care of Archive & Library Collections"
- ISO/TR 18492:2005, the international standard for the "Long-term Preservation of Electronic Document-Based Information." Other standards we adhere to in terms of managing and preserving digital records are dealt with in our Digital Preservation Policy and Strategy

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 original, printed and digital 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 variety 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:

- Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic individuals, groups and businesses
- Commonwealth heritage individuals and communities
- Records relating to disabled people
- Faith groups
- LGBTQ+ groups and individuals
- Small businesses
- Voluntary groups
- Arts organisations
- Charities

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, for example nitrate film, infested material, or digital files stored on certain types of obsolete or damaged storage media
- 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 records become the property of Birmingham City Council including any Intellectual Property Rights (including copyright, trademark, patent and design rights).

Where donations include items created by others, the ownership of Intellectual Property Rights cannot be transferred to us and remain with the owner, e.g. where you donate correspondence you received from others, the copyright holder remains the author of the correspondence.

- **Deposit:** as a loan with ownership remaining with the depositor for a term of 50 years, at the end of which period, unless otherwise agreed with us, the deposit automatically becomes a donation. Public records and records of ongoing organisations and businesses are excluded from this and can be deposited on indefinite long-term loan.
- **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, and has committed to developing and implementing policies, strategies, procedures and systems for the long-term management and preservation of digitised assets in its care. Birmingham Archives & Collections does not normally accept digitised copies or surrogates of physical archives (i.e. a JPEG scan of a photographic negative, or a PDF version of a handwritten ledger or minute book) except in certain exceptional circumstances.

Printed material

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

Archives & Collections welcomes the donation of printed resource materials relating to the culture and history of Birmingham. The Local Studies collection chiefly consists of published texts but also contains a considerable volume of miscellaneous ephemera items not published in a standard book format -

Exhibition Boards

Our storage facilities are not suitable for storing exhibition boards. We will only consider such donations if they are part of a community funded project undertaking research in the community and digital images can be provided.

Newspapers and newspaper cuttings

Newspapers are not normally accepted unless they are an integral part of a large archive collection.

Newspaper cuttings should be in a bound format in volumes chronologically arranged and with a clearly defined subject.

Postcards & music, royal visit and theatre programmes

We are not able to consider such donations unless an itemised list can be supplied to assist staff in checking against our existing holdings. We appreciate sample photographs of materials to assist our assessment. For programmes, we give priority to donations made by the host of the event as part of an accession made by that organisation.

Scrapbooks

Volumes need to have a contents list and/or index along with details of the compiler(s).

Other Ephemera Items – Posters, leaflets, flyers

Please supply an itemised list of the items you wish to donate along with photographs.

Getting your records to Archives & Collections

If you have material you wish to donate or deposit, please contact archives.heritage@birmingham.gov.uk in the first instance with a description of the item(s). If we determine the material falls within the remit of our Collections Development Policy, an archivist will make an assessment and we will contact you with the outcome of our decision. If we decide to accept the material, we will make arrangements with you for the transfer of the material to the Library of Birmingham.

Where archive material is brought to the Library of Birmingham without prior confirmation that it will be accepted, and without confirmation of the method and date of transfer, staff reserve the right to refuse to take it and instead will ask you to contact us by e-mail as per the above.

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.

Loans back to depositors

When material is deposited in Archives & Collections, it cannot be temporarily withdrawn unless there is a specific reason to do so. In some circumstances, depositors need access to their documents off site for current business purposes. If this is required, the depositor must contact Archives & Collections in writing with details of their request at least 14 days before the documents are required. If Archives & Collections agree, we will loan the documents back to the depositor for a specified period of time, after which they must be returned. Requests for loans cannot normally be processed on the same day, however if the situation is urgent, please contact us to discuss the options available.

The loan of material will only be made back to the depositor and not to third parties, even with permission from the depositor. If the loan is for an exhibition, please contact Archives & Collections to discuss this further as different procedures apply as set out in our Exhibition and Loan Policy.

Contact with depositors

It is the responsibility of depositors to advise us of any change in contact details or ownership.

Archive collections in our care are subject to Data Protection and Copyright legislation and we may at times need to contact depositors about decisions relating to this (see Access to Closed Records Policy and Access Policy for further details). We may also need to contact you should we receive requests from heritage organisations wishing to display material you have deposited with us in an exhibition (see Exhibition & Loans Policy for further details).

While we will make every reasonable effort to contact depositors at their last known address where we require a decision regarding use of their collections, should our correspondence be returned or remain unanswered after a period of 12 months, the deposit may automatically be treated by us as a donation.

Procedure for review

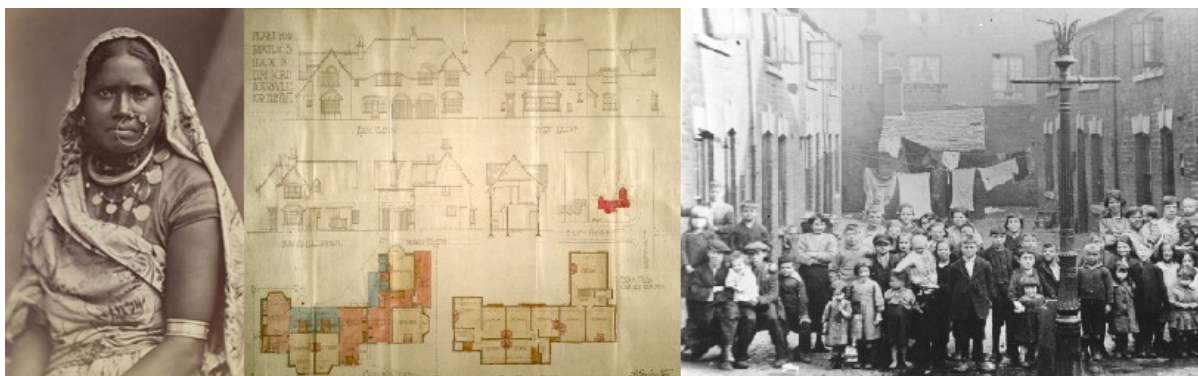
This policy document requires review every three years. The next review date is June 2026, unless circumstances dictate otherwise.

Appendix A: Donation of unpublished or self-published works to the Library of Birmingham

We regret that we do not accept books that are deemed self-published. Self-publication is defined as to be where the author(s) has sole control of the content of the works without the collaboration of an established publisher to provide editorial review. Libraries are reliant on publishers to undertake various forms of editorial control that eliminate factual error, potential libellous content and material that may be viewed as counter to law. Editorial processes also ensure that the correct level of grammar, language, description etc. which are used in a book is appropriate and relevant for the age level to which the book aimed at. Librarians simply do not have the time to appraise each and every book in this detail and are not necessarily qualified to do so in matters of law.

No judgement on the quality of an un-published or self-published book is either implied or should be inferred by our position. It is recognised that self-published works may have equal merit, meet or exceed the quality of those published through established channels, however the reputational risk to the library service of stocking un-published or self-published works exceeds this potential loss.

Appendix B: Information for Potential Depositors



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 has the following statutory powers:

- To contain the official and public archives of the Council and has been 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.
- Is approved by the master of the rolls for the deposit of manorial and other documents.
- Has been appointed by the Bishop of Birmingham as a Diocesan Record Office for diocesan and parochial records.
- Is empowered under the Local Government (Records) Act 1962 to accept privately owned records by way of donation, purchase or deposit.

We care for over 6,000 collections dating from the 12th century to the 21st century which we make available for research. They are stored on more than 12 miles of shelving and we acquire around 250 new collections each year. We are anxious to know of any archives at risk and welcome enquiries from individuals, businesses and institutions.

Terms of deposit

Archives can be transferred to us by donation or deposit:

- If you donate your records, ownership is transferred to Birmingham City Council and this includes any Intellectual Property Rights (including copyright, trademark, patent and design rights). Where donations include items created by others, the ownership of Intellectual Property Rights cannot be transferred to us and remain with the owner.
- If you deposit your records, unless otherwise agreed with us at the time of deposit, they are on loan to Birmingham City Council for a period of 50 years for us to look after on your behalf, but you retain ownership for that period of time. At the end of the 50 year term, the deposit becomes a donation and ownership is transferred to us as above. Public records and records of ongoing organisations and businesses are excluded from this and are deposited on indefinite long-term loan.

Appraisal and advice

Not all records are of historical significance so our archivists can help you to identify records of archival importance before you deposit any material with us. Records which we decide not to keep may be returned to you, or disposed of with your permission.

Storage

Archives are stored in our state-of-the-art storage facilities in the Library of Birmingham. These are built to meet BS 4971:2017, the British standard for the 'Conservation & Care of Archive & Library Collections'. As such they offer fire protection, stable temperatures and levels of humidity to ensure the long-term preservation of archives.



Preservation

See our separate Collections Care and Conservation Policy.

Cataloguing

Records transferred to us will be allocated unique reference numbers and documented or catalogued in line with overall priorities. Where possible, a paper catalogue or list will be made available in our searchroom, and on our online catalogue, and copy sent to the depositor free of charge.

Access

Archives are made available to the public free of charge in the Wolfson Centre, our secure, supervised public searchroom. Researchers must have a reader's ticket to view original material and this can be obtained when they visit us, on production of suitable ID.

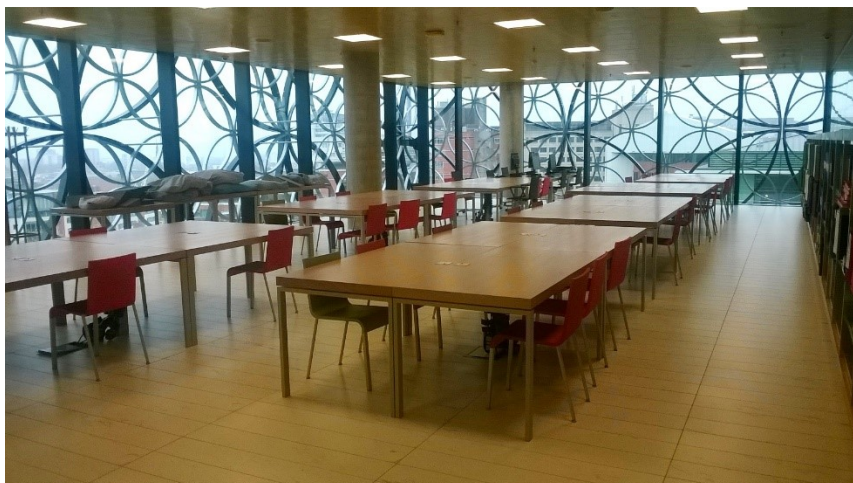
Material in our collections sometimes contains personal information about living individuals. Some information is more sensitive than others and under the Data Protection Act 2018, we have a legal obligation to protect these 'special categories' of personal information. As a result, access to some information held in the collections may be restricted to the public and marked as 'closed (content)' in the online catalogue.

There are a few specific circumstances where it is possible for someone to apply to access the information contained in closed records:

- a PhD student or professional academic may request to view the closed records in person
- someone can request their own information in records held in the archives (subject to ID checks, we would carry out a search of the records on the person's behalf)

- someone can request information in the records relating to a deceased person (subject to proof of death and ID checks, we would carry out a search of the records on the person's behalf).

Further details are available in our Access to Closed Records Policy.



Reproduction

Researchers in the searchroom may use their own cameras without the flash to photograph unpublished archives on purchase of a Photo Permit and within the restrictions of copyright legislation as follows:

- for private study or research, one copy of a document can be made under the “fair dealing” principle (Copyright Designs and Patents Act 1988 and Copyright and Rights in Performances (Research, Education, Libraries and Archives) Regulations 2014). It must only be used by the person doing the copying for his or her own private research and it cannot be published or used for commercial purposes.
- for publication or commercial purposes with prior written permission of the copyright holder.

Friends of Birmingham, Archives Heritage and Photography

You can get more involved by becoming a Friend of Birmingham Archives and Heritage. See our separate leaflet or [our Friends of Birmingham website](#).

Some of our archive collections:

- Records of the City Council and urban district councils
- Poor law unions
- Court records: quarter and petty sessions
- Coroners inquests
- Wills
- Hospital Records
- Education and school records
- Building plan indexes and plans
- Parish and non-conformist records
- Deeds, manorial and estate papers

- Business records
- Personal and family papers
- Records of clubs, societies and charities
- Photographs
- Letters and diaries
- Maps and plans
- Drawings and watercolours, prints and engravings
- Oral history recordings
- Trade catalogues
- Theatre Programmes

Collections of Note:

- Archives of Soho: Matthew Boulton and James Watt
- Birmingham Botanical Gardens
- Bournville Village Trust
- Cadbury Family Papers
- Calthorpe Edgbaston Estate
- Charles Parker Archive
- John Hardman & Company
- Metro Cammell Ltd.
- Middlemore Homes
- Birmingham Hebrew Congregation
- City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra
- Vanley Burke Archive

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Appendix C: Helping us Collect - Depositing and Donating Archives



What do we collect?

Birmingham Archives and Collections collects and preserves both original and printed records of historical significance relating to the City of Birmingham, its people, businesses, institutions and societies. We care for over 6,000 collections dating from the 12th century to the present day which we make available for research.

Do you have any ideas?

We are keen to add to our collections to represent as many Birmingham people, groups and voices as possible.

Some of the areas we are interested in developing are:

- Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic individuals, groups and businesses
- Commonwealth heritage individuals and communities
- Records relating to disabled people
- Faith groups
- LGBTQ+ groups and individuals
- Small businesses
- Voluntary groups
- Arts organisations
- Charities

Do you know any groups or individuals who may be interested in donating? If so, we would be keen to hear from them. Please spread the word, give them this flyer or pass on our contact details!

How does it work?

The material will be stored in our state-of-the-art storage facilities in the Library of Birmingham which meet national standards. Archives are made available to the public free of charge in the Wolfson Centre, our secure, supervised public reading room.

You can choose whether you would still like to own the material you transfer to us or whether you would like to pass the ownership on to Birmingham City Council.

We have robust procedures in place to ensure that confidential material is not made available to the public. We comply with the Data Protection Act 2018, UK General Data Protection Regulations, the Freedom of Information Act, and the wishes of the person giving us material.

If you have any questions or ideas about material we could collect please get in touch with us at archives.heritage@birmingham.gov.uk.