

# Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Archive Service

## Collections Information Policy

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# Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Archive Service

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## Introduction

Staffordshire Archives and Heritage comprises Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Archive Service, the William Salt Library and the County Museum Service. The Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Archive Service is an Accredited Archive Service administered and funded by Staffordshire County Council and Stoke-on-Trent City Council under a joint agreement. The William Salt Library is a charitable library managed by the Archive Service on behalf of the Trustees. The County Museum is a provisionally Accredited Museum funded by Staffordshire County Council and works in partnership with museums across the region to provide museum development support.

The Archive Service operates Staffordshire Record Office, Stoke-on-Trent City Archives and the William Salt Library. The Archive Service provides services for Staffordshire County Council in relation to its legal documents and archives.

The vision is:

Connecting people to the collected stories and heritage of Staffordshire, Stoke-on-Trent and beyond.

The mission is:

To connect people to the memories of Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent, by engaging them with the collections we develop and preserve for current and future generations.

## Section 1: General Context and Purpose of this Policy

1.1 The Archive Service is responsible to its parent authorities, Staffordshire County Council and Stoke-on-Trent City Council, and to the owners of deposited collections, for its stewardship of the records in its care. Collections Information is of vital importance in fulfilling the responsibilities outlined above. It enables the service to manage the collections in such a way as to maintain good stewardship, and to provide access to the collections to a wide

range of researchers. This Policy enables the Service to demonstrate to its parent authorities, to depositors of collections, to external funding bodies and to interested members of the wider public, its commitment to good stewardship and wider access to collections.

1.2 The Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Archive Service is a multi-repository service, serving the communities of the County of Staffordshire and the City of Stoke-on-Trent. The County Record Office was established in Stafford in 1947 to act as a repository for the historic records of Staffordshire County Council (SCC) and other historic records relating to the county and is now called Staffordshire Record Office (SRO). Following the closure of Lichfield Record Office (LRO) in December 2017 it received the archives formerly held there, including material originally at Burton Archives which had closed in 2003, and records for the Diocese of Lichfield. Stoke-on-Trent City Archives (SoTCA) was established in 1997 to act as a repository for records of Stoke-on-Trent City Council, and of a wide range of organisations and individuals in the City. Collecting statements for each repository are set out in the Service's Collections Development Policy and Strategy.

1.3 The Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Archive Service seeks to ensure that its archive collections reflect the broadest range of the life and work of the people of Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent, past and present. Its role is not confined to historical, academic or learning communities because archives can be a powerful tool in helping to foster a sense of community, continuity and belonging. They can stimulate an interest and enjoyment in learning about the past at all levels.

## Section 2: Legislative Context

2.1 The Archive Service operates within a framework of archive legislation and other legislation which governs record-keeping.

Public records: Staffordshire Record Office and Stoke-on-Trent City Archives are appointed by the Lord Chancellor for the deposit of Public Records under the terms of the Public Records Act 1958, for the deposit of specified classes of Public Records including Quarter Sessions, HM Coroners, hospital records, magistrates' court records.

Manorial records: Staffordshire Record Office is recognised by the Master of the Rolls for the deposit of manorial and tithe records under the Law of Property Act, 1922, and the Tithe Act, 1936.

Anglican parish records: Staffordshire Record Office is designated by the Bishop of Lichfield for the deposit of Anglican parish records for the archdeaconries of Lichfield, Stoke-on-Trent and Walsall under the Parochial Registers and Records Measure, 1978 (amended 1992).

Anglican diocesan records: Staffordshire Record Office is designated by the Bishop of Lichfield for the deposit of the archives of the central administration of the Diocese of Lichfield, under the Parochial Registers and Records Measure, 1978 (amended 1992).

2.2 The Archive Service will comply with the Freedom of Information Act with regard to both its own records and as custodian of records of its parent authorities and third-party organisations containing information falling within the scope of the Act.

The Archive Service will comply with the Data Protection Act, either as data controller or as data processor, as appropriate, for records containing personal information about living persons, falling within the scope of the Act.

## Section 3: Systems for Recording Collections Information

3.1 Accessions: New accessioning will be carried out using CALM archive management software at all repositories. Prior to 2001 accessions were recorded in manual accession registers, of which there are digitised scans or paper photocopies as back-up copies. Legacy systems have continued to be maintained for the time being as a backup for current electronic accessioning. A separate register of digital assets will be maintained once permanent retention of digital archives is in place.

3.2 Depositor records: New depositor records for both offices will be held on CALM archive management software. Receipts will be sent electronically unless requested in paper form or where only a postal address is known. Prior to 2001 depositor records were held in manual accessions registers, for which there are back-up copies, and depositor card index. Legacy systems have continued to be maintained as a backup for current electronic depositor recording.

3.3 Filing systems: Current correspondence between depositors or their officers, agents or legal representatives and the Archive Service will be saved electronically, wherever possible. Legacy paper records have not been digitised. Deposit/donation files treated as confidential and kept permanently.

3.4 Catalogue information: New catalogue records will be recorded in CALM archive management software. Any remaining manual paper catalogues will be input or imported as ongoing work. Uncatalogued collections will be recorded on a back-cataloguing spreadsheet updated annually.

3.5 Conservation information: New conservation records will be recorded in CALM archive management software, where electronic catalogue entries exist, and data from older paper records will be input retrospectively in due course. Paper record systems used prior to 2012 remain in use as a back-up consisting of the main conservation record sheets, retained in document reference number order, kept since 1961, and a summary conservation register in date order, kept between 1991 and 2021.

3.6 Electronic systems:

- Archive management software: CALM ALM
- Word-processing: MS Word
- Spreadsheets: MS Excel
- Digital preservation software: Preservica

## Section 4: Information collected at the Point of Deposit

### 4.1 Accessions

We will record the following information at the time of receipt of the records, where handed over in person, using the interim receipt form: name and address of donor/depositor, contact and intermediary information, a brief description of the records and note of creating body with covering dates, where identified, copyright information, if known, and whether permission is

given in advance for any transfer or disposal. The form will be signed and dated by the person who hands over the records and the receiving member of staff. This will also be used for the handover of digital material through a physical medium.

We will create a formal accession record from this information, with date of accession, and a more detailed summary description if required. We will send out a formal final receipt, unless the depositor or donor requests otherwise, within a target timescale of 15 working days. The depositor or donor has a period of 28 days to make any queries or withdraw the collection, after which time the terms shall be deemed accepted and agreed.

#### 4.2 Depositor records

We will record the following information at the time of receipt of the records, using the interim receipt form if applicable: the name and address of the owner or owning organisation, and of any intermediary, with contact names, as applicable. Where ownership is unclear, such as where items have been found or have been passed on anonymously, that fact is also noted. We will also use information contained in electronic or paper correspondence.

We will inform depositors of the obligation to inform the Archives Service of changes to any of the above information.

We will attempt to trace lost contacts or relatives should the need arise, but we are limited in what is feasible. We have several key collections where we maintain good contact with depositors.

#### 4.3 Intellectual property rights

We will record the following information at the time of receipt of the records, using the interim receipt form if applicable: material subject to copyright and name and contact details of the copyright owner, where known. We will provide guidance for donors and depositors if requested, to explain various issues around intellectual property rights.

Upon formal accessioning, when the records are looked at in more detail, or during later cataloguing, it may be noted that specific items are subject to copyright as published works, and this information will be noted in the catalogue, as appropriate. Copyright in unpublished works is dealt with on a case-by-case basis if requested for further publication. Copying of unpublished works will be allowed for private non-commercial research.

#### 4.4 Access restrictions

We will record the following information at the time of receipt of the records, using the interim receipt form if applicable: access restrictions, most commonly for data protection reasons. We will always raise this issue explicitly with donors and depositors.

We will review the requirement for access restrictions both at the time of formal accessioning and during cataloguing, ensuring that sensitive personal information falling within the scope of the Data Protection Act is correctly identified. If appropriate, we will also consider at this point whether it may be more appropriate to return such records to the donor or depositor.

We will include clear information about access restrictions in catalogue descriptions, including under which provision of the Data Protection Act information is exempt from disclosure.

We will negotiate with depositors who wish to place their own non-statutory access restrictions on records, ensuring that such restrictions are minimised.

We will apply three levels of access restriction:

- can be seen if a third-party data protection declaration is signed;
- cannot be seen, but information may be extracted by staff;
- confidential deposit - no record of the accession is published during the period of the restriction (very rarely used)

#### 4.5 Ownership and legal status of collections

We will record the following information at the time of receipt of the records: whether it is a deposit (indefinite loan), donation, transfer between repositories, bequest, or presentation under Public Records Act or other relevant legislation.

#### 4.6 Publicising new accessions

We will publish an annual list of all new accessions across the Archive Service (with the exception of confidential deposits) on the Archive Service website. We will publicise new accessions in our Annual Report and our newsletters, and through social media and events. We will complete an annual return of new accessions for The National Archives.

We will ensure that the existence of all new accessions (except confidential deposits) is noted on the public online catalogue Gateway to the Past, even where not yet fully catalogued. Such summary collection level information records basic description, covering dates and extent.

### Section 5: Disposals and Withdrawals

5.1 The Service's approach to disposals is detailed in the Appraisal and Disposal Policy. We will review long-held collections against the Collections Development Policy, and regularly compile a list of collections, and of parts of collections, no longer deemed to conform to the policy. We will submit this, together with recommendations for actions to be taken, to the Joint Archives Committee for approval.

5.2 The Service's approach to withdrawals is detailed in the Terms of Agreement for the Deposit of Records. We will supply a copy of this document to all new depositors. If a temporary withdrawal is requested, a guidance leaflet is sent covering handling and security of original records, particularly where documents will be on public display. The recording of withdrawals is covered in the following section.

### Section 6: Location and Movement Control

6.1 Since 2014/15 the Location module of CALM has been used to link some catalogue entries at Item or Collection level to shelf locations in the Locations database. This is in addition to existing practice across the Service's repositories:

- SRO: In general, collections are in deposit number order, split between volumes, boxes, maps and photographs. Notices on the physical shelving bays record the covering references within each bay. Some large or otherwise significant collections have been

located out of sequence for a variety of reasons, for which there is a paper list in the strongrooms and electronic copy, in addition to cross-reference notices on the shelving bays. There is an electronic locations list for maps and outsize items, with paper copies in the strongrooms. There are paper and electronic lists of collections and items stored off-site.

- SoTCA: archive material is located to a shelf using a card index system by collection, and on a capacity and volume spreadsheet in location order. The latter will be used to map locations across to new locations once the archives has relocated to the Potteries Museum and Art Gallery in 2023-2024. The long-term aim will be to add locations to CALM.

The process of linking locations in CALM at item level is very time-consuming and will take many years to be completed. Other information may be recorded in CALM such as at collection level or putting text in the CALM catalogue location field. In the meantime, the keeping and updating of legacy information, both analogue and digital, remains vital.

6.2 Permanent or semi-permanent transfer of collections between repositories within the Service will be recorded in the accession registers of both the sending and receiving repositories including accessions recorded in CALM.

Movement of items or collections withdrawn by depositors, both temporary/short-term and permanent withdrawals, will be recorded in the withdrawals register and on a signed withdrawal form. Where temporary withdrawals may be for a longer period of time, this will be recorded on the catalogue to be visible to the public online.

6.3 Movements of all items out of the strongrooms for use by researchers, depositors, archive service staff, for conservation or reprographic work, or for exhibition or outreach activities, on or off-site, and their return, will be recorded using a duplicate or triplicate document production slip.

The document request slips act both as a control in the strongrooms for issued items, and as receipts for both the Service and the person to whom the document is issued. One slip marks the place in the strongrooms where the document came from, one slip is kept with the document or in the public search room and is signed or initialled by the recipient. A third copy may be retained by the recipient, should they wish. Following the return of documents, the two slips are paired together, initialled as put away, and checked. The top signed slip will be retained by the Service in date order when put away for security purposes. These slips are retained for ten years. Where documents are found to be missing either when checking back slips or at a later date when stock-checking or when re-requested, a careful search is made including other documents put away on the same day or week. If not found, this will be recorded on the Missing List which is kept in electronic format as a spreadsheet, with some additional information on paper such as old slips and notes. The catalogue will be updated in either a public field or in the location field for staff information.

## Section 7: Guides and other non-Catalogue Finding Aids

7.1 The following finding aids are published currently:

Cross-Service "Guides to Sources" series:

1. Parish Registers and Bishops Transcripts
2. Nonconformist Registers
3. Tithe Maps and Awards
4. Business Records

5. Enclosure Acts, Awards and Maps
6. Colliery Records
7. Manorial Records
8. Transport Records
9. Electoral Registers
10. Estate Maps, and Estate Maps Supplement

Guide to the Contents of Lichfield Record Office, 1999  
Family Collections, 1992

7.2 A copy of each of the cross-service guides is kept in our reading rooms, from which staff provide advice to members of the public. These guides are updated where possible when relevant material is newly accessioned or catalogued, or during a major revision.

7.3 The Guides to Sources numbers 1-9 are available as free PDF files available on request, as advertised on the Archive Service website. The Guide to the Contents of Lichfield Record Office, Family Collections, and Guide to Sources number 10 Estate Maps are hard-copy publications, and will not be re-published in their current format, since the online catalogue lists all collections at some level even where not fully catalogued. The text of the Guide to Lichfield Record Office where it relates to the Diocese Collection is incorporated into the online catalogue at section or series level.

7.4 Analogue indexes are retained in the repository reading rooms relating to their own holdings. These were developed to meet the individual circumstances of each repository and were maintained during the gradual process of retro-conversion of catalogues. These are no longer updated where all information is recorded in the online catalogue.

## Section 8: Catalogue Information

8.1 Archival description through cataloguing is fundamental to both the intellectual and the physical accessibility of archives.

Intellectual access is provided through high-quality catalogues, enabling an understanding of the context of the records, their inter-connectedness, and the richness of their content. Intellectual access is widened by the availability of archive catalogues online. Physical access is facilitated through the numbering of individual units of production (individual documents, bundles, volumes, maps, etc.), which enables efficient retrieval of items from storage for research in the Service's search rooms.

Our long-term aim, therefore, is to ensure that all archives in our care are catalogued to international standards, and that all catalogues are available online, to ensure the widest-possible degree of access. Working towards that goal involves retrospective inputting of paper catalogues, cataloguing of newly deposited collections, cataloguing of backlog collections, and catalogue improvement by adding fuller descriptions.

8.2 The Service's Collections Information Manual (formerly called Cataloguing Manual), setting out procedures and standards for principal data fields was adopted in 2000, when CALM archive management software was introduced for cataloguing across the Service. Prior to this point cataloguing standards had varied over the years and were not codified.



The Manual adopted International Standard Archival Description (General) [ISAD(G)] with additional restrictions to ensure further uniformity across the Service, for example date formats.

Digital records will be catalogued in the same way as analogue records but with additional recording of metadata as required.

8.3 Retrospective conversion of analogue catalogues began in 2000 through an HLF-funded project, which established our online catalogue “Gateway to the Past” and enabled 30% of our catalogues to be retro-converted. Since then, work has continued, through both involvement with national projects (“Access to Archives”) and local work by staff and volunteers.

8.4 Following public consultation on the Staffordshire History Centre Project in 2015 priority was given to the publication of electronic collection-level descriptions for each collection held at the former Lichfield Record Office and at Stoke City Archives, whether uncatalogued or having an analogue catalogue. Due to this work, 99.9% of all collections across the Service have some form of presence online, 15.5% of which remain uncatalogued, 79.5% of which are fully catalogued online (correct in 2023).

8.5 A prioritisation exercise on the cataloguing backlog was carried in 2004 out using the Logjam methodology developed by MLA North West. Since that date, suitability of collections for volunteering and work experience is also considered. The cataloguing backlog spreadsheet is updated annually.

8.6 Members of the public have access to:

- publicly available electronic cataloguing through our online catalogue “Gateway to the Past” ([www.archives.staffordshire.gov.uk](http://www.archives.staffordshire.gov.uk));
- publicly available electronic cataloguing of certain collections through the National Archives’ Discovery portal, as a result of participation in regional Access to Archives projects (“Muck and Brass”, 2002, and “Seven Ages of Man”, 2003);
- paper catalogues in our reading rooms, some of which may not yet be retrospectively converted into electronic format;
- where appropriate, full or partial access to draft lists or box lists of uncatalogued or partially catalogued collections, where they exist, or Archive Service staff may provide information from such lists to assist access.

## Section 9: Conservation and Preservation Information

9.1 Conservation record sheets have been kept since the Service’s conservation workshop opened at Staffordshire Record Office in 1961. They are retained in paper format in document reference number order to enable easy access to information about work that might have carried out on a specific item.

9.2 In 1991 a Conservation Register was started in date order to provide an overview of the work carried out, and at the same time the amount of information recorded on the conservation sheets was expanded significantly. The register was discontinued in 2021 as the record sheets contain all necessary information combined with the information on CALM.

9.3 Since 2012 the Conservation database in the CALM archive management software has been used to record conservation work. Legacy data has not yet been migrated, but it is

planned that the information will be input into CALM in the future through a volunteer project. Information about the physical condition of a document may also be noted in the catalogue entry.

9.4 For information about the annual work programme, see the Archive Service Preservation and Conservation Policy and Strategy.

## Section 10: Staffing and Funding

10.1 All Archive Service staff, both professional and para-professional, may be involved in the creation or editing of collections information. Core staff time is allocated to the following functions:

- accessioning of new archive deposits, including the recording of donor/depositor information, access information, and information regarding intellectual property rights
- cataloguing of new deposits
- cataloguing of backlog collections
- retrospective conversion of paper catalogues
- catalogue enhancement
- creation of new name and place authority records
- recording of conservation and preservation information

Prioritisation between and within the various strands of this work is carried out by the Service's cross-repository Collections Team, as appropriate.

10.2 External funding is regularly sought to enable cataloguing of large collections and catalogue enhancement. Funding may be obtained from regular grant-giving organisations and from the university sector such as collaborative doctoral research projects and ongoing volunteer projects funded by the academic sector. New cataloguing and catalogue enhancement work undertaken through externally funded projects generally involves both qualified project officers and volunteers.

10.3 With regard to collections information, volunteers create and edit archive catalogue data under the supervision of a qualified member of staff or project officer. Supervision takes the form of training on the software and on cataloguing standards, and quality assurance before the relevant collection catalogue is published. The use of volunteers is explained more fully in the Service's Volunteer Policy.

10.4 Individual volunteer agreements explicitly include a transfer to the Archive Service of intellectual property rights in the resources such as indexes created whilst volunteering.

## Section 11: Protection of Collections Information

11.1 Electronic data:

The CALM archive management system includes the following databases: Accessions, Depositors, Catalogue, Locations, and Conservation, with associated Authority Files for Name, Place and Subject Terms. The server for the CALM system is on the Staffordshire County Council network.

Electronic filing is on servers on the networks of both partner local authorities.

Electronic catalogues intended for printing were created since 2000 by mail merging text from CALM. These are still currently stored on the Staffordshire County Council network, but since 2019 paper lists are no longer routinely created. Back-ups of both the CALM system and of electronic filing are automatically made daily through a process administered by the authorities' ICT departments.

The CALM Security module affords a means of providing various levels of access for professional and para-professional members of staff and service volunteers to each of the databases making up the archive management system, tailored to their role.

Digital archives will be preserved using the Preservica software and associated software for recording metadata including checksums will be maintained on the Staffordshire County Council network.

## 11.2 Manual data:

Accession registers: SRO has digital images of its accession registers on the SCC network and those of the former LRO, and SRO also holds security photocopies of the accession registers for SoTCA.

Depositor information: manual correspondence files, including signed receipts completed at the point of deposit, are kept in a staff area inaccessible to the public.

Catalogue information: a master set of legacy paper-only catalogues for SRO is currently kept in the strongrooms but this may be reviewed since almost all paper catalogues are now on CALM and are backed-up electronically, and they can be re-issued in paper form by the mail merge process if required.

Conservation information: the master set of paper conservation records are kept in the conservation workshop at Staffordshire. Digital images of the conservation registers are kept on the SCC network.

Document issue information: retained security sets of document issue slips are kept for a minimum of ten years. Those for SRO and the former LRO are securely stored off-site through the County Council's Information Governance Unit (records management). Those for SoTCA have been stored in the office area of the former site, and may be stored in the new strongrooms in the new site when completed.

## Section 12: Collections Information Improvement

12.1 Programmes of work to improve collections information are identified and prioritised by the Collections Team.

### Review

This policy will be reviewed every five years. Review date 2028.

Revised May 2023