

Bristol Archives

Acquisition Policy



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Definitions

Record: Information created, received and maintained as evidence and information by an organisation or person, irrespective of the technology used to create and store them or the type of information they contain.

Current records: records that are required for regular administrative use.

Semi-current records: records that are occasionally used for reference, but not for day-to-day working.

Archives: records that are judged to be worthy of permanent preservation by virtue of the information they contain, an evidential function they perform or a legal obligation that they satisfy.

1 Introduction

1.1 Bristol Archives is part of Bristol Culture, a service provided on behalf of Bristol City Council. Bristol Culture exists to deliver, facilitate and support cultural activity in Bristol. Its mission is to be excellent, inclusive, resilient and valued.

1.2 Bristol Archives aspires to provide an innovative, creative and customer-focused service that inspires users to learn about and enjoy the story of Bristol and its people, and the history of the British Empire and Commonwealth.

2 Context

2.1 Policy context

2.1.1 This policy forms part of an overall Collections Management Policy for Bristol Archives.

2.1.2 Bristol Culture is located within the Place directorate of Bristol City Council.

2.1.3 This policy supersedes and replaces that contained as Appendix 5a: Policy 1 in the Application for Designated Status for the Bristol Archive, History and Literary Collections (2005).

2.1.4 This policy will be reviewed in 2019 and at least every three years thereafter.

2.1.5 The National Archives will be informed of any changes to this policy.

2.2 Legal and policy framework

Bristol Archives acquires material in accordance with a statutory and policy framework that includes the following:

- 2.2.1 Local Government (Records) Act 1962 (amended by the Local Government Act 1992, in relation to unitary authorities): enables all local authorities to promote the use of their records and empowers county and county borough councils to acquire records by purchase, donation or deposit.
- 2.2.2 Local Government Act 1972 (section 224): places an obligation on 'principal authorities' to make proper arrangements for documents that belong to them or are in their custody.
- 2.2.3 Public Records Acts 1958 and 1967, and the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010: Bristol Archives is recognised as a Place of Deposit under the Public Records Acts and acquires locally created Public Records (such as Quarter Sessions, hospital and Coroners' records) under the authority of the Acts. (Locally created public records selected for permanent preservation are to be transferred to Bristol Archives after 20 years.)
- 2.2.4 Manorial Document Rules 1959, and The Manorial Document (Amendment) Rules 1963 and 1967. Tithe (Copies of Apportionment) Rules 1960, and Tithe (Copies of Instruments of Apportionment)(Amendment) Rules 1963.
- 2.2.5 Parochial Registers and Records Measure 1978 (amended 1993): Bristol Archives is designated by the Bishop as the official place of deposit for records of parishes located in the Archdeaconry of Bristol.
- 2.2.6 Data Protection Act 1998
- 2.2.7 Freedom of Information Act 2000
- 2.2.8 Archives for the 21st Century. Government policy document, published 2009

Bristol Archives will abide by future legislation and policy recommendations relating to archives and records management.

2.3 Standards

- 2.3.1 Bristol Archives recognises its responsibility, in acquiring additions to its collections, to meet the requirements of The National Archives' Archive Service Accreditation standard, as an officially approved 'place of deposit'. Bristol Archives will therefore not acquire material that it is unable to preserve safely or to which it is unable to provide reasonable means of access.
- 2.3.2 The Archive, History and Literary Collection relating to the history and development of the City of Bristol, held at Bristol Archives and Bristol Central Library's Local Studies Service, was designated as an outstanding collection by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (2005).

3 Aims

3.1 Bristol Culture's values, as set out in its mission statement (2015), are:

- We believe in being professional, efficient, accessible, welcoming and in all ways and always acting with integrity
- We are an organisation which is creative, challenging, resourceful and vibrant
- We are conscious of our remit to reveal the past and the present, and use this to direct our future
- We take pride in providing an excellent service for the public as well as being a leading organisation within the cultural sector
- We seek to make a difference, to put Bristol on the map, and to improve communities' wellbeing through engagement with their cultural provision

3.2 To deliver this mission, Bristol Archives seeks to acquire, preserve and make accessible for use by present and future generations archive and record collections that represent comprehensively the history, lives and activities of the people, communities and organisations of Bristol through the ages. In addition, Bristol Archives seeks to acquire, preserve and make accessible archive and record collections which relate to the history, lives and activities of people, communities and organisations from the overseas territories of the former British Empire and Commonwealth under colonial rule.

3.3 The aim of this policy is to define and publish the basis on which Bristol Archives acquires or disposes of archives and records.

4 The policy

Acquiring new material is a fundamental function of an archive repository in order to develop existing collections and in order to maintain its role as a repository of archives and records reflecting the development of communities, cultures, the built environment and the natural environment.

In this way the citizens of Bristol and its visitors, both virtual and physical, can explore the city's heritage, and the heritage of the former British Empire and Commonwealth, through its collections.

4.1 Collecting remit

4.1.1 Archives and records are and have been created in many different formats and media. This includes hand-written, printed, or graphic information captured on paper, parchment, digital and optical media. Provided they are consistent with the policies outlined below, the format or medium of records will not preclude acquisition by Bristol Archives. Where appropriate, Bristol Archives will advise depositors on the migration of their records to alternative media for access or preservation.

- 4.1.2 Bristol Archives will not acquire records that are still in current or administrative or semi-current use by their creator or owner, (with the exception of semi-current Bristol City Council records, which may be transferred to the Modern Records Unit within Bristol Culture). The Archives Unit will only acquire records that, in the opinion of the City Archivist or his designated representative, are worthy of permanent preservation as archives.
- 4.1.3 Bristol Archives will seek to develop and maintain working relationships with depositors of collections for which it receives regular accruals. For example, it will encourage regular deposits of records from the Diocesan Registrar and local churches and chapels. Through the Modern Records Unit it will work in close co-operation with the City Council's departments, to ensure the systematic transfer of official records to its custody.
- 4.1.4 Bristol Archives will take account of the collecting policies of other record repositories and organisations collecting in the same or related areas or subject fields, to ensure that collections are deposited in the most appropriate place. It will consult with these organisations where conflicts of interest may arise or to define areas of specialisation, in order to avoid unnecessary duplication and waste of resources. Bristol Archives will liaise closely with:
- Other Bristol City Council services, including museums, galleries and libraries.
 - Other record repositories within the City of Bristol. E.g. ss Great Britain Archive, University of Bristol Theatre Collection and University of Bristol Library Special Collections
 - Neighbouring local authority record offices, including Gloucestershire Archives, South West Heritage Trust, Bath Record Office and Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre.
 - Bodleian Library for Commonwealth and African Studies, The National Archives, The British Library, London University School of Oriental and African Studies.
 - Other relevant institutions, nationally or internationally.
- 4.1.5 Furthermore, when material offered to Bristol Archives does not meet its own criteria, depositors will be encouraged to contact the most relevant alternative department or organisation.
- 4.1.6 Printed material:
Bristol Archives does not normally have a special interest in the acquisition of published material except where it forms an integral part of an archive, contains significant manuscript annotation, or is of value as a research aid. In particular, Bristol Archives will not seek to collect newspapers of the county area; the newspaper collections being held and maintained by Bristol Libraries.
- 4.1.7 Works of art, objects and artefacts:
Bristol Archives does not normally have an interest in the acquisition of works of art (with the exception of maps and topographic drawings or prints) or other objects or artefacts. It will not collect such items unless they are an intrinsic part of an archive collection, e.g. design drawings accompanied by the actual objects to which they relate, and then only with the agreement of the relevant Bristol Culture museums and

galleries curators.

4.1.8 Copy material:

Copies of archives and records may be acquired where an owner does not wish to part with original documents, provided that the original material falls within the current stated collecting policy.

Copies of original archive material relating to the archive collections but held in other repositories may be acquired for the secondary source collections, in order to support and enrich the collections and for the benefit of local research, depending on resources.

4.1.9 Acquisition of archives and records outside the current stated policy will only be made in exceptional circumstances and then only after proper consideration and consultation, having regard to the interests of other repositories (see 4.1.4 above).

4.1.10 Collection will be by both passive and active means; that is, by appraising unsolicited offers of material and by actively seeking to obtain material judged to be fundamental to the aims of the service through engagement and research.

4.1.11 Bristol Archives acquires documents, in accordance with current terms and conditions, by:

- Transfer
- Donation (by way of gift or bequest)
- Purchase
- Deposit

In some cases loans may be made for specific purposes or periods but this will be exceptional and the proposed use will be made clear to potential depositors.

4.1.12 Bristol Archives accepts donations and deposits in good faith on the assumption that the depositor or donor of the records has legal title of the records or is authorised by the owner(s) to deposit such material with Bristol Archives.

4.1.13 Collections acquired by Bristol Archives are accepted only on the basis that they will become accessible to the public in due course, subject to current information legislation. Bristol Archives will therefore not acquire archive collections on which the depositor wishes to place unreasonable access restrictions. Please see Bristol Archives' Terms and Conditions of Deposit Agreement for further details.

4.1.14 Notice of every new acquisition and of any restrictions on its access or use will be made public at the earliest opportunity. Bristol Archives will do this by informing The National Archives of its annual accessions. Newly catalogued collections will be published at Bristol Archives' online catalogue, and, where possible, will be added to The National Archives online 'Discovery' catalogues.

4.2 Bristol collections

- 4.2.1 Bristol Archives will acquire collections of archives and records that relate entirely or principally to the current geographical or administrative area of the city and county of Bristol, and relevant areas of the historic counties of Gloucestershire and Somerset.
- 4.2.2 Subject to the overriding principle that the integrity of archival groups should normally be preserved as far as possible and practicable, Bristol Archives will not acquire records relating to places outside the area specified in 4.2.1 unless they have a close connection with that area.
- 4.2.3 Within the remit specified in 4.2 Bristol Archives will acquire:
- Records of Bristol City Council and its predecessors.
 - Records of other related local authorities and statutory bodies.
 - Local public records offered to the service under the terms of the Public Records Acts.
 - Records of the Diocese of Bristol, including records of the Bishop, Archdeacon, and Dean and Chapter.
 - Records of Church of England parishes in the Archdeaconry of Bristol.
 - Records of non-conformist churches and chapels (which may be physically located outside the current local authority area referred to in 4.2.1, but whose administrative area includes Bristol e.g. Methodist circuits).
 - Records of local organisations, businesses, estates, societies, other public and private institutions, families, individuals and others.
 - Manorial and tithe records.
- 4.2.4 Bristol Archives will not seek to represent any particular historical, sectarian or other viewpoint in its acquisition of records but to reflect as objectively as possible all aspects of Bristol's past and present.
- 4.2.5 Bristol Archives acquires archives and records relating to Bristol from all dates.
- 4.2.6 Bristol Archives will not acquire material that, in the opinion of the City Archivist or his designated representative, does not enhance our knowledge and understanding of the city and county, its development and its communities in some way.

4.3 British Empire & Commonwealth Collections

- 4.3.1 In 2012, the substantial collections of the former British Empire & Commonwealth Museum in Bristol were transferred to Bristol Museums, Galleries and Archives (now Bristol Culture). The archives and records include personal collections of photographs, films, oral testimonies and papers from those who lived and worked in the former British Empire and Commonwealth.

- 4.3.2 The transfer of the British Empire and Commonwealth collections means we will consider the acquisition of archive collections, which relate to colonial and post-colonial histories within the former British Empire and Commonwealth
- 4.3.3 Collecting will be informed by the existing collections (avoiding duplication), and carried out in consultation with Bristol Culture museums' curators and, where relevant, other national and international institutions (see 4.1.4 above). (Where offered and if there is not a more appropriate national or international institution, material relating to indigenous colonial / post-colonial histories will be a priority for collection, as the former British Empire and Commonwealth Museum collections reflect more the perspectives of British staff and their immediate families living and working in overseas territories.)

4.4 Acquisition process

- 4.4.1 Bristol Archives will respond to offers of records within 10 working days of receipt of the offer.
- 4.4.2 Documents held together in an original archival grouping are not normally divided, nor is any item selected or removed in detriment to that unity. However, where a large collection falls into clearly discrete parts, there may be a case for it being divided, for example between other record repositories.
- 4.4.3 The preservation needs of material will be assessed, in relation to their intrinsic historical value, prior to or immediately following their accession.
- 4.4.4 When records are delivered into its custody Bristol Archives will make its Terms and Conditions of Deposit/Donation available to the depositor/donor, in electronic or paper format. A Receipt for Deposit/Donation of records must be signed when the material is delivered into the custody of Bristol Archives. This constitutes an immediate agreement between the owner of the records (or their representative) and Bristol Archives, which is superseded by the Certificate referred to in 4.3.5.
- 4.4.5 In the case of donations or deposits, a written acknowledgement will be sent to the donor or depositor within 10 working days of delivery of the material. A formal Certificate of Deposit/ Donation will accompany this acknowledgement. Together with the Terms and Conditions of Deposit/Donation, the certificate constitutes an agreement between the donor or depositor and Bristol Archives. Bristol Archives will keep a signed copy of this agreement on file and provide a copy to the donor or depositor of the records. In cases where the certificate is not signed and returned, the receipt referred to in 4.3.4 will stand as the legal binding agreement.
- 4.4.6 Bristol Archives is indebted to all those who place records in its care for use by the public. However, it recognises that owners of collections on "deposit" may receive substantial benefits, for example where their records have been stored within environmentally controlled 'strong rooms', catalogued by Bristol Archives staff, or have received professional conservation or preservation treatment. Therefore, in certain circumstances the depositor(s) of such a collection may be required to reimburse Bristol Archives' expenses if they withdraw it within the minimum deposit period specified in the Terms and Conditions of Deposit.

4.5 Collections development

- 4.5.1 Bristol Archives seeks to acquire further archives and records to reflect all spheres of life and all communities in the areas it serves, aiming to cover all parts of the areas and as wide a range of institutions and subjects as possible.
- 4.5.2 Consultation with Bristol's communities will be used to help direct the collection of archive material that is significant to our understanding of both Bristol's history and the history of the Empire and Commonwealth, and contemporary culture. This will add to the desire to empower local people to become involved in shaping their archive service.
- 4.5.3 The development of the collections will be planned, as far as possible, to support the strategies and objectives of Bristol Culture, the City Council, the policies, strategies and interests of relevant national and regional agencies and local stakeholders, including users.

4.6 Disposal

- 4.6.1 During arrangement and description of archive collections Bristol Archives may subsequently deem records in its custody to be not worthy of permanent preservation. In such cases it will either confidentially destroy them or return them to the depositor or donor. The wishes of the depositor or donor in this matter will be established at the moment of deposit and recorded in Bristol Archives' accession documentation.
- 4.6.2 Subsequent to deposit Bristol Archives may consider that records in its custody would be better transferred to the collections of a more relevant repository. The wishes of the depositor or donor in this matter will be established at the moment of deposit and recorded in Bristol Archives' accession documentation.
- 4.6.3 Bristol Archives operates on the principle that there should be a strong presumption against the disposal, by any means, of any documents once they have been selected for permanent preservation in its custody. However collections are periodically reviewed as per 4.4.1 and 4.4.2 and their retention is re-assessed so that non-core material is not retained unnecessarily.
- 4.6.4 If Bristol Archives should become unable, either temporarily or permanently, to provide proper care for records they will be transferred, on terms agreed in writing with the consent of the owner and Bristol City Council, to another appropriate repository with similar overall objectives.
- 4.6.5 Owners of records retain the right to withdraw them subject to the Terms and Conditions of Deposit Agreement. However, see also 4.3.6.
- 4.6.6 Bristol Archives will not sell any records from its collections, unless these are unwanted duplicates or ephemera and this is done with the permission of the depositor. In most cases this will be limited to printed items.

4.6.7 When records were originally acquired with the aid of an external funding organisation, permission from that organisation will be sought before the records are de-accessioned, transferred to another organisation or destroyed.

To comment on this policy or for further information, please contact the City Archivist:

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