

# Bristol Archives

## Collection Development and Acquisition Policy



<b>Contents</b>		<b>Page</b>
	Definitions	2
1	Introduction	2
2	Context	2
	2.1 Policy context	2
	2.2 Legal and policy framework	3
	2.3 Standards	3
3	Policy aims	4
4	The policy	4
	4.1 Collecting remit	4
	4.2 Collections development	7
	4.3 Bristol Collections	7
	4.4 British Empire & Commonwealth Collections	9
	4.5 Acquisition process	10
	4.6 Disposal procedures	10

## 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. Our mission is to be excellent, inclusive, resilient and valued. We work closely with colleagues across the organisation to manage and develop our collections.
- 1.2 We hold the archives of the City of Bristol (Bristol Collections) and also archival material from the British Empire & Commonwealth Collections formerly held at the British Empire & Commonwealth Museum. We aspire 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 Growth & Regeneration 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 2021 and at least every three years thereafter.

## 2.2 Legal and policy framework

We acquire 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 records of Quarter Sessions, hospitals and the coroner) 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 (to be superseded by the General Data Protection Regulation from May 2018)
- 2.2.7 Freedom of Information Act 2000
- 2.2.8 Archives for the 21st Century. Government policy document, published 2009

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

## 2.3 Standards

- 2.3.1 We recognise our responsibility to meet the requirements of The National Archives' Archive Service Accreditation standard, as an officially approved 'place of deposit'. We therefore will not acquire material that we are unable to preserve safely or to which we cannot 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 between Bristol Archives and Bristol Central Library's Local Studies Service, was collectively Designated as an outstanding collection by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (2005).

### **3 Policy aims**

3.1 We share the values of Bristol Culture, as set out in its mission statement (2015):

- 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, we seek to acquire, preserve and make accessible archive and record collections for use by present and future generations, as follows:

3.2.1 The Bristol Collections will represent comprehensively the history, lives and activities of the people, communities and organisations of Bristol through the ages. Where gaps are found to exist, we will actively seek to acquire records which can enable those gaps to be filled (see 4.3.4 below.)

3.2.2 We also seek to acquire, preserve and make accessible archive and record collections relating 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 (see 4.4.3 below.)

3.3 The aim of this policy is to define and publish the basis on which we acquire or dispose of these archives and records.

### **4 The policy**

Acquiring new material is a fundamental function of an archive repository in order to develop both existing collections and new audiences, as well as 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 the Bristol Archive collections.

4.1 Collecting remit

4.1.1 We will collect material 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.

- 4.1.2 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. Where appropriate, we will advise depositors on the migration of their records to alternative media for access or preservation.
- 4.1.3 We 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 their designated representative, are worthy of permanent preservation as archives.
- 4.1.4 We will seek to maintain and develop working relationships with depositors of collections for which we receive ongoing accruals. Through the Modern Records Unit we will work in close co-operation with Bristol City Council departments, to ensure the systematic transfer of official records designated for permanent retention to our custody. We will continue to work with public bodies, including courts, the coroner, hospitals, schools, police and the fire brigade to transfer records at appropriate dates. We will also encourage regular deposits of records from the Diocesan Registrar and local churches and chapels and from other established depositors who include Bristol businesses, charities, societies, arts organisations, and local councillors and political organisations.
- 4.1.5 We 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. We 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. We will liaise closely with:
- Other Bristol City Council services, including museums, galleries and libraries.
  - Other record repositories within the City of Bristol, such as the ss Great Britain Archive, University of Bristol Theatre Collection and the University of Bristol Library Special Collections
  - Neighbouring local authority record offices, including Gloucestershire Archives, South West Heritage Trust, Bath Record Office and Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre.
  - Bodleian Library for Commonwealth and African Studies, The National Archives, The British Library, London University School of Oriental and African Studies (see 4.4.2. below).
  - Other relevant institutions, nationally or internationally.
- 4.1.6 Furthermore, when material offered to Bristol Archives does not meet our own criteria, depositors will be encouraged to contact the most relevant alternative department or organisation.

- 4.1.7 Printed material:  
We do not normally have a special interest in acquiring published material except where it forms an integral part of an archive, contains significant manuscript annotations, or is of value as a research aid. In particular, we will not seek to collect newspapers of the county area, as local newspaper collections are held and maintained by Bristol Libraries.
- 4.1.8 Works of art, objects and artefacts:  
We do 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. We 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.
- 4.1.9 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.
- 4.1.10 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 4.1.5 above).
- 4.1.11 We acquire documents, in accordance with our 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 We accept 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 transfer such material to Bristol Archives.
- 4.1.13 We accept collections only on the basis that they will be made accessible to the public in due course, subject to current information legislation. We will therefore not acquire archive collections on which the depositor wishes to place unreasonable access restrictions. Please see Bristol Archives' Terms & Conditions of Deposit Agreement for further details.
- 4.1.14 Notice of every new acquisition (and of any restrictions on access or use) will be made public at the earliest opportunity. We will do this by informing The

National Archives of our annual accessions. Newly catalogued collections will be published on Bristol Archives' online catalogue, and, where possible, will be added to The National Archives online 'Discovery' catalogue.

## 4.2 Collections development

- 4.2.1 We seek to acquire further archives and records to reflect all spheres of life and all communities in the areas we serve, aiming to cover all parts of the areas and as wide a range of institutions and subjects as possible. We particularly seek to acquire material relating to communities and subjects which are currently less well represented, as outlined in 4.3.4 and 4.4.3 below.
- 4.2.2 In line with our responsibility for capturing the corporate memory of Bristol City Council, we plan the development of the collections, as far as possible, to support the strategies and objectives of the council and of Bristol Culture. This includes preserving the records of the council's activities for both council use and wider access, and working to ensure that Bristol's diverse communities are represented and documented within in our collections.
- 4.2.3 We will work with Bristol Culture colleagues to develop both the archive and museum collections, particularly the curators of social, industrial and maritime history, archaeology, fine arts and British Empire & Commonwealth Collection, by sharing information about potential material, signposting depositors and creating connections across our disciplines.
- 4.2.4 We consult with Bristol's communities to help direct the collection of archive material that is significant to our understanding of both the history and contemporary culture of both Bristol and the British Empire and Commonwealth. To do this, we use and develop the networks available to us through Bristol Culture and the activities of its engagement team, as well as our local universities, our partners and other local organisations, to develop new audiences and empower local people to become involved in shaping their archive service.
- 4.2.5 We recognise the importance of collecting records regardless of original format, including born-digital material. Our Digital Preservation Policy sets out our current strategy for managing digital assets and how we aim to develop digital collecting and preservation in the future, particularly to capture the records of Bristol City Council.
- 4.2.6 In planning collection development, we also work within the policies, strategies and interests of relevant national, regional and local agencies (including professional guidance from The National Archives) and with the interests and needs of our depositors, service users and other stakeholders in mind.

## 4.3 Bristol Collections

- 4.3.1 We will acquire collections of archives and records of all dates 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.

4.3.2 Subject to the overriding principle that the integrity of archival groups should normally be preserved as far as possible and practicable, we will not acquire records relating to places outside the area specified in 4.3.1 unless they have a close connection with that area.

4.3.3 The Bristol collections record the history of the city from the 12th century onwards. Amongst the strengths of the archive are civic records ranging from a significant collection of medieval charters and customals to the records of the present-day Bristol City Council, whilst the wider collections richly reflect Bristol's growing importance as a national, European and then an international trading city and now as a centre of arts and culture. Through the breadth of these collections, almost all aspects of life in the city are represented in the archives and within the remit specified in 4.1, we hold and continue to collect:

- Records of council and its predecessors, acquired either directly or via the Modern Records Unit (see 4.1.4).
- 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 4.3.1, but whose administrative area includes Bristol e.g. Methodist circuits).
- Manorial and tithe records.
- Records of local organisations, businesses, estates, societies, other public and private institutions, families, individuals, community groups and others.

4.3.4 Some weaknesses in the collections cannot be corrected: for example, the loss of most of Bristol's workhouse records to bombing in the Second World War. However, we actively seek to collect material from communities and local themes not well represented in the archives. In recent years, we have actively focused on collecting records of Bristol's African-Caribbean and LGBT communities, as well as disability and arts organisations. We now also seek to build relationships with and collect records from other ethnic minority communities in the city (particularly Black African people), including through working with Bristol Culture's Engagement team. We also seek to address other gaps in our collections by collecting records of sports groups, women's organisations, political organisations and newer local businesses, including small enterprises.



- 4.3.5 We will not seek to represent any particular historical, sectarian or other viewpoint in our acquisition of records but to reflect as objectively as possible all aspects of Bristol's past and present.
- 4.3.6 We will not acquire material that, in the opinion of the City Archivist or their designated representative, does not enhance our knowledge and understanding of the city and county, its development and its communities in some way.
- 4.4 British Empire & Commonwealth Collections
- 4.4.1 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. The strengths of the collections lie in the geographical and chronological spread of material and particularly in the fact that they contain predominantly personal and family collections which complement more official records held elsewhere. The main notable weakness in the collections is that, with very few exceptions, they were collected overwhelmingly from British colonial donors and reflect those perspectives. The paper archive collections also contain significant amounts of printed, non-unique material which we do not intend to retain long-term (see 4.4.4 below).
- 4.4.2 The transfer of the British Empire & Commonwealth Collections means we will consider further acquisition of archive collections which relate to colonial and post-colonial histories within the former British Empire and Commonwealth. Future 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 4.1.5 above).
- 4.4.3 Where it comes to our attention, we actively seek to ensure the survival of material relating to indigenous colonial and post-colonial histories. This may take the form of liaison with appropriate repositories nationally and internationally or, only if there is not a more appropriate institution in the material's country of origin, acquiring the material ourselves. As the former British Empire & Commonwealth Museum collections reflect more the perspectives of the British living and working in overseas territories, we will also actively seek to make links with organisations in the UK and internationally whose collections are concerned with indigenous colonial and post-colonial histories. This will enable us to share information with the aim of reflecting a more balanced perspective on colonial life, and to direct researchers to relevant collections elsewhere.
- 4.4.4 Under the terms of the transfer agreement, Bristol Culture is permitted to dispose of items transferred from the British Empire & Commonwealth Museum after ten years. Any disposal post 2022 will be carried out in accordance with the Disposal Procedures outlined below (see 4.5) and is likely

to be centred on printed, duplicate and other non-unique material. Our intention is then to apply for designation of the remainder of the permanent collection by the Arts Council.

#### 4.5 Acquisition process

- 4.5.1 We will respond to offers of records within 10 working days of receipt of the offer.
- 4.5.2 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.
- 4.5.3 The preservation needs of material will be assessed, in relation to their intrinsic historical value, prior to or immediately following their accession.
- 4.5.4 When records are delivered into our custody we will make our Terms & 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 4.4.5.
- 4.5.5 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. We 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 4.4.4 will stand as the legal binding agreement.
- 4.5.6 We are indebted to all those who place records in our care for use by the public. However, we recognise that owners of collections on “deposit” may receive substantial benefits, for example where their records have been stored within environmentally controlled strongrooms, 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 our expenses, if they withdraw it within the minimum deposit period specified in the Terms & Conditions of Deposit.

#### 4.6 Disposal procedures

- 4.6.1 During arrangement and description of archive collections, we may subsequently deem records in our custody to be not worthy of permanent preservation. In such cases we 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 our accession documentation.

- 4.6.2 We periodically reassess collections to ensure that the material we hold fits our remit. Subsequent to deposit, we may consider that records in our custody would be better transferred to the collections of a more relevant repository. We may also decide to remove duplicate items or material not worthy of permanent preservation. 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 We operate 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 our 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 we 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 & Conditions of Deposit Agreement. However, see also 4.5.6.
- 4.6.6 We will not sell any records from our 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:**

Bristol Archives  
B Bond Warehouse  
Smeaton Road  
Bristol BS1 6XN

Tel 0117 922 4224  
Email [archives@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:archives@bristol.gov.uk)