

Bristol Archives Collections Management Policy



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1 Mission statement and strategic aims

1.1 Bristol Culture exists to deliver, facilitate and support cultural activity in Bristol.

1.2 Bristol Culture's mission is to be **excellent, inclusive, resilient** and **valued**.

- **Excellent** – We strive for excellence in all we do: from the delivery of our public sites, exhibitions, events and festivals, to our collections' care, learning opportunities and support for the cultural ecology of the city.
- **Inclusive** – We are an inclusive organisation which works in partnership with communities and other cultural organisations, enables engagement with and development of our historic collections, shares our knowledge and resources, and facilitates participation in culture for all.
- **Resilient** – We are a cultural business and operate as such, income generating where possible. We are reviewing our working practices to be sustainable, working towards being carbon neutral, and contributing to the wider cultural infrastructure and economy of the city.
- **Valued** – We are valued within Bristol as a key cultural provider that communities engage with and want, and we are seen nationally and internationally as a leader within the cultural sector.

1.3 Bristol Culture's values 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

1.4 Contribution to Bristol City Council's strategic aims

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.

The quality of our offer enhances the city and county of Bristol. A vibrant culture offer attracts people to Bristol as a place to live and work, and underpins economic investment in the city. Secondary spend associated with cultural tourism is vital to the future growth of the economy, Bristol has much to offer, but by developing the customer offer Bristol Culture can further position Bristol culturally within the Local Enterprise Partnerships, in the sub region, nationally and internationally.

Corporately, Bristol Culture is well positioned to deliver Bristol City Council's Strategic Objectives. Bristol Museums, Galleries & Archives have consistently topped 1 million visits since the opening of M Shed in June 2011. This includes over 35,000 formal school visits per annum.

The support of the public and the media continues to position Bristol Culture as providing a culture service of national significance. As a Major Partner Museum (MPM - hence part funded by the Arts Council England) and County Archive service, a member of the National Museum Directors' Council and the Chief Archivists in Local Government Group, Bristol's museums' and archives' provision continues to develop the profile of the city and contribute to its reputation nationally and internationally.

Audiences are placed at the centre of what we do, helping to develop knowledge, create vibrant learning opportunities for all children in Bristol and to encourage the development of skills. Through innovative use of digital technologies we aim to create opportunities for more people to access our services in more ways.

Financial resilience and enterprise is a key part of the new way of working developed in the last five years. A quarter of Bristol Culture's annual budget now comes from income generating and revenue raising activity. In a climate of continued reductions in local authority funding nationally, maintaining and developing new income streams is vital in order to maintain the current level of services provided.

Bristol Culture is efficiently and effectively managed, with audience intelligence underpinning decisions on programmes, clear delivery of performance indicators, and the continued development of an enterprise culture that establishes the optimal level of income.

2 Summary of the collections

- 2.1 Primary care and access to the Bristol and British Empire & Commonwealth archive collections is provided by Bristol Archives staff.
- 2.2 Bristol Archives collections relate to most aspects of the city's history and are acquired and held in accordance with a statutory framework which includes the Local Government Acts of 1962 and 1972, and the Public Records Act of 1958 and 1967.
- 2.3 The collections include those of Bristol City Council, the former Avon County Council, the Diocese of Bristol, central government (such as Bristol courts, hospitals and shipping), tithes and manors, as well as private 'unofficial' archives including those of Bristol businesses, political parties, trades unions, societies, institutions, theatres, nonconformist churches, community groups, landed estates and families.
- 2.4 The archive, history and literary collections relating to Bristol's history and development held at Bristol Archives and Bristol Central Library's Local Studies

Service were Designated an Outstanding Collection by the Museums Libraries and Archives Council in 2005.

- 2.5 The British Empire & Commonwealth archives (formerly of the British Empire & Commonwealth Museum) contain many 'unofficial' archives from former colonial servants working in the late C19th and C20th, and include photographs, films and oral histories, alongside paper records.

3 Staff

- 3.1 Bristol Archives is headed by the City Archivist, reporting to the Head of Collections & Archives within Bristol Culture. There are 11 FTE staff in the unit. Bristol Archives is responsible for taking care of and facilitating use of the historic collections.
- 3.2 Bristol Archives is split into two teams: the Archivists team and the Searchroom team.
- 3.3 The Archivists team, led by the City Archivist comprises one Senior Archivist and three Archivists. In addition, during 2015 one FTE archivist post was added for the British Empire & Commonwealth Collections. This team is responsible for cataloguing collections, answering complex written enquiries, plus delivering engagement activities. Its members also offer professional support to the Searchroom team on a rota basis. This team actively pursues the acquisition of archive material and liaises with donors/depositors, as outlined in Bristol Archives' Acquisition Policy.
- 3.4 The Searchroom team is led by the Senior Archivist and comprises one Searchroom Officer and four Archives Assistants. This team delivers the public searchroom service, advising visitors on the collections and their relevance to their research, and producing archives as required. They also answer simple written enquiries and provide copies of documents requested by researchers (either as photocopies/.pdfs or through liaison with the Bristol Culture Photographic & Digitisation service).
- 3.5 All archives staff are involved in engagement work. Major outreach projects are supported by Bristol Culture's Formal Learning & Engagement teams.
- 3.6 Bristol Archives encourages volunteer involvement wherever practical and volunteers are usually supervised by the Archivists. These can vary from people with an interest in history, a desire to help Bristol Archives in its work or an interest in pursuing a career in archives. Bristol Archives staff utilising volunteers will ensure that the established internal procedures are used in terms of recruitment of and support to those volunteers (currently co-ordinated through the Volunteer Officer in the Engagement Team).
- 3.7 Student placements and internships can be very useful to both the student and Bristol Archives, but, when taking anyone on, care is taken to ensure suitable work programmes of *dual* benefit are set out and managed.

- 3.8 Year 10 school work experience placements require particular and often intensive support and so currently are not undertaken. Careful consideration will be given to the benefits and motivation for agreeing to any work placements along with any service wide approach to these schemes.
- 3.9 Bristol Archives staff contribute to all the strategic objectives of the service but in particular to ensuring the preservation, sustainability and accessibility of the collections held, and by making a significant contribution to educational achievement, broadening opportunities for lifelong learning to meet the needs of all potential users; where necessary working with partners in related cultural fields to achieve this aim in the most meaningful way possible.
- 3.10 Intellectual access to the collections is provided through interpretation using a variety of media. Primarily this is through Bristol Archives online catalogue, but also through exhibitions and displays, publications, and electronic media.
- 3.11 Direct physical access to the archive collections is under the control of the archives staff, particularly the Searchroom team.

4 Acquisition & disposal

- 4.1 Bristol Archives will maintain a policy which defines and publishes the basis on which it acquires (or disposes of) records. This policy will include:
- A summary description of the existing collections held at Bristol Archives
 - Details of the geographical and subject areas for which Bristol Archives collects material
 - Information about future development of the collections
 - Details of the acquisition process
 - Details of the legal framework within which Bristol Archives operates
- 4.2 The preservation needs of material will be assessed prior to or immediately following its accession.
- 4.3 The service will only accept material which it has the resources to care for in the long term.
- 4.4 There is a strong presumption against the disposal of any items in the collections once they have been selected for permanent preservation. Sound archival reasons for disposal must be established before consideration is given to the disposal of any items in Bristol Archives' collection. Items for disposal will be offered in the first instance to other accredited repositories.

- 4.5 Bristol Archives will maintain strong links with Bristol Diocese and Bristol City Council departments (in particular the Modern Records, Legal & Democratic Services & Planning teams) to ensure the timely transfer of records.
- 4.6 The Acquisition Policy will take into consideration the acquisition policies of other archive services, libraries and museums and will liaise with other bodies regarding the acquisition of material in which there may be a common interest.
- 4.6. The Acquisition Policy will be reviewed every five years.
- 4.7. The Terms of Agreement for the Deposit or Donation of Records will be reviewed every five years.

5 Documentation

- 5.1 Bristol Archives uses both the CALM archival management system (Bristol collections), and EMu (British Empire and Commonwealth collections).
- 5.2 Manuals for accepting, accessioning and cataloguing collections are devised and maintained by the City Archivist and Archivists team (with support from the Museums' Documentation & Digital teams). These follow the principles of current archival standards for cataloguing and indexing: ISAD(G), NCA Name Authority Guidelines, ISAAR(CPF) and the UNESCO subject thesaurus. Staff work within the procedures and principles laid down in the manuals.
- 5.3 Additions or amendments to the collections manuals will be discussed at Archivists team meetings.
- 5.4 All incoming collections will be recorded and given a unique number on the accessioning database; they will also be given a documented location at this stage.
- 5.5 Cataloguing priorities will be decided by the City Archivist in conjunction with the Archivists team.
- 5.6 Professional assistance in cataloguing will be given to staff and volunteers by the City Archivist and Archivists team.
- 5.7 Completed collection catalogues will be made publicly available via Bristol Archives online catalogue (Bristol collections) and Bristol Museums collections online (British Empire & Commonwealth Collections).
- 5.8 Both the CALM and EMu servers are maintained and backed-up by Bristol City Council's Corporate ICT team. The servers will also be regularly re-indexed to ensure that the component databases stay in synchronisation with each other. Procedures for updating the servers and online catalogues will be maintained by the Archivists and Documentation teams.

- 5.9 Ways to share knowledge of the collections as widely and as usefully as possible will be explored. (For example, Bristol Archives participated in the A2A project, the development of Bristol City Council's historic mapping website 'Know Your Place', and completes The National Archives annual accessions return.)
- 5.10 Donors/depositors will receive a temporary receipt immediately on deposit of records and a full receipt within ten working days.
- 5.11 All staff will be made aware of new acquisitions so that they can give up-to-date advice to enquirers/researchers.
- 5.12 Estimates of the amount of time and resources required to complete the backlog of cataloguing will be completed and updated as necessary. A spreadsheet prioritising cataloguing backlog is maintained and kept under regular review by the Archivists team.

6 Access

- 6.1 Collecting, housing and caring for archives is only justified if appropriate access is provided to them. Intellectual and physical access to the collections should be available wherever possible taking into account issues of security, copyright, data protection, condition & care of documents and so on. Access to collections is primarily provided through Bristol Archives' searchroom service. Exhibitions, displays, publications, strongroom tours, events, talks, learning and engagement activities are further examples of how access may be provided.
- 6.2 Bristol Archives has accepted the general principles set out in the *The Standard for Access to Archives* (2008), published by the Public Services Quality Group, as its main guidelines on access to services and seeks to implement the requirements of this standard.
- 6.3 Strongrooms are arranged with good access routes for staff, visitors and archives. Good housekeeping is essential to maintain clear gangways and to allow access to the collections within strongrooms. Documentation of the collections will be adequate to enable archives to be located quickly and efficiently. Storage systems will follow the principles of BS 4971. Trolleys and lifting equipment will be available where required.
- 6.4 In line with the recommendations of *Archives for the 21st century*, the use of digitised archive content, when available, will be considered in order to provide remote access to collections.
- 6.5 Bristol Archives fully appreciates the need to increase opportunities for access and lifelong learning and to raise awareness of, and stimulate interest in, archives and related activities. It actively works with Bristol Culture's Participation, Programme and Learning teams to develop projects and opportunities that promote and extend access to the collections.

7 Research

- 7.1 High quality research using Bristol's archives is encouraged and supported as it is fundamental to releasing the potential of the collections for interpretation to the general public and specialists alike.
- 7.2 Bristol Archives supports the work of the Bristol Record Society in transcribing and publishing editions of material contained within the city's archives. The City Archivist will serve as an officer of the Bristol Record Society Council.
- 7.3 The results of significant research will always be lodged with Bristol Archives, and published in the most appropriate format to the largest possible appropriate audience.
- 7.4 This information enables delivery of the strategic aims of Bristol Culture and to inspire people to enjoy and learn about Bristol's story.
- 7.5 Bristol Archives staff will actively seek appropriate partners in research and its resourcing where this is identified as a priority, including commissioning work from specialists.
- 7.6 Bristol Archives staff will comply with *bona fide* requests from external researchers wherever it is possible to do so, and promote the potential for research that the collections offer.
- 7.7 At all times research will not be entered into if it is likely to contravene laws or ethical or moral considerations.

8 Conservation and preservation

- 8.1 Protection of the archival heritage of the city and county of Bristol is a core aim of Bristol Archives. Conservation and preservation, therefore, will play a key role in maintaining the collections in its care.
- 8.2 The Bristol Culture Collections Care Preservation Policy and Strategy sets out the standard to which records in the care of Bristol Archives will be kept. Bristol Archives staff will follow strict preventative conservation procedures which will be regularly reviewed by the Bristol Culture preventative conservation officer. The Bristol Culture paper conservator will provide expert advice for assessing the conservation/preservation needs of documents when required, and specify how necessary conservation work is undertaken.

9 Loans

- 9.1 The loan of items to other museums, collections and individuals can be important in increasing access to archives. The process however can place archives at considerable risk from many different sources and therefore requires control measures that are appropriate and robust.

- 9.2 Depositors requesting loans of their items on deposit are managed by Bristol Archives' depositors' loan procedures.
- 9.3 Loans made to other organisations of donated collections (ie. where title has been passed to Bristol City Council) are managed following the Bristol Museum and Art Gallery Loan Procedures. Loans to other accredited UK museums and archives imply a standard of care will be achieved.
- 9.4 The nature of some items held by Bristol Archives will mean that the loan to other bodies will not be permitted unless under very exceptional circumstances.
- 9.5 Conditions of loan are provided to all potential loan recipients and include fees payable.

10 Security

- 10.1 Overall physical security of Bristol Archives areas within the buildings is largely the responsibility of the City Archivist. Robust security procedures and guidelines are in place and will be reviewed at regular intervals. The City Archivist regularly liaises with the Council's Facilities Management team about issues concerning the whole buildings and their perimeters.
- 10.2 Systems such as intruder detection and links to monitoring stations will be subject to a regular programme of maintenance.
- 10.3 Staff will be fully conversant with security guidelines and procedures, and themselves have responsibility for ensuring windows, doors, etc are closed and locked as appropriate.
- 10.4 Access to archive strongrooms and other controlled areas, as well as keys and security codes, will be restricted to Bristol Archives staff and other authorised personnel only. Arrangements are in place for managing external contractors whilst working in secure areas.
- 10.5 The Head of Collections & Archives will carry out each year a random spot check of the archive collections (as required by Internal Audit). This will take the form of items selected from documentation registers being requested to be viewed that working day and the reverse (ie. evidence of documentation will be requested following items being selected from strongrooms). A record of this process will be kept.

11 Insurance

- 11.1 An overall insurance figure for the archive collections owned by Bristol City Council is required to be collated and provided to the Principal Insurance Officer. It is acknowledged that financial markets can fluctuate rapidly and professional assistance

may be required in order to create meaningful insurance figures for many parts of the collections.

12 Emergency planning

- 12.1 A manual and plan for use in case of emergency (approved by the Bristol Culture Management team) will be available and is currently maintained by the Operations Manager and the Preventative Conservator within the Bristol Culture team. The plan recognises the archive collections as core assets of the service and sets out procedures to minimise damage to the collections and buildings, and to maintain security at times of emergency.
- 12.2 Supplies to enable the Emergency Management Plan to be put into operation at immediate notice are maintained at Bristol Archives sites. This includes conservation resources and materials.
- 12.3 Continued improvement and the updating of emergency management planning is a service priority.

13 Health and Safety

- 13.1 All staff have a responsibility to ensure their own safety and that of others.
- 13.2 All staff will be aware of, and conversant with, Bristol City Council's Health and Safety Policy and Procedures, and specifically for the Bristol Culture team, managed through the Corporate Health & Safety Management Scheme (CHaSMS).
- 13.3 Risk assessments will be carried out for any procedure where there is potential for harm. The assessments should be sent to the H&S representatives, the relevant line manager(s) and the official, union appointed, H&S representatives. Hard copy print outs will be maintained, updated and signed. Electronic copies will be kept on the centralised 'S-drive'. All staff potentially at a risk will be made aware of, and have access to, the appropriate risk assessments. Risk assessments will be reviewed every two years, or more frequently if appropriate and re-written or re-signed to confirm they are still relevant.
- 13.4 All relevant H&S documentation will be kept in a central place which all staff are aware of.
- 13.5 Written guidelines on safe methods of working will be completed where thought useful (e.g. for training new members of staff), but these will not replace the need to complete Risk Assessments.

14 Code of Conduct and Ethics

- 14.1 As officers of Bristol City Council, all staff will be expected to abide by the Council's Code of Conduct. As members of the wider archives profession, all officers will be expected to abide by the Archives and Records Association (ARA) Code of Ethics, published by the Archives and Records Association in May 2016. Bristol Archives adopts the professional standards set by the Code as guiding principles for the conduct of all staff. Bristol Archives also subscribes to the standards set by the International Council on Archives (ICA) Code of Ethics.
- 14.2 All staff will sign Bristol City Council's Code of Conduct.
- 14.3 All staff will be issued with the ARA's and the ICA's Code of Ethics.

15 Charging

- 15.1 As a publicly funded archives service, free access to collections is maintained for *bona fide* enquirers. However, Bristol Archives will seek to supplement income through charging for specifically identified services which may include copying (including digital scanning and photography), permission fees for reproduction, talks and strongroom tours and some detailed enquiries.
- 15.2 All charges will be reviewed on an annual basis and agreed by the Head of Culture.
- 15.3 Staff will be responsible for ensuring that the appropriate charges are made for services.

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

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