

The University of Sheffield archive collection and appraisal policy

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Purpose and context

This policy defines the University of Sheffield archive (“the University archive”) and describes the scope of the material it aims to acquire.

The term archive in the context of this policy describes information existing as records (in any format) and identified as worthy of permanent preservation. Records are defined as *information created, received and maintained as evidence and as an asset by an organisation or person, in pursuit of legal obligations or in the transaction of business.*¹ The long term preservation of records provides the University with a range of benefits including:-

- The protection of rights & obligations
- Compliance with legislation & regulations
- Evidence based research
- The formation and protection of an institutional cultural identity and corporate memory

¹ BS ISO 15489-1:2016 - Records Management, part 1: Concepts and principles

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The archive aims to make the retained material accessible for researchers, both internal and external to the University, and to ensure that any material is managed according to best practice archival principles and practices.

Overview

The role of the collection policy in supporting the University archive

This policy aims to ensure that decisions taken relating to collecting or disposing of archive material are accountable, transparent and appropriately documented.

It forms part of the suite of policies and procedures supporting the provision of a University archive for the University. Some of these documents will be produced and owned by other areas of the University, but the aim is that this policy complements and aligns to other policies where appropriate or necessary.

Scope

This policy relates to all records created by the University of Sheffield, in any format, and applies to all staff, volunteers and creators of University records. The scope also applies to the existing University and its predecessor institutions. Specifically:-

- The University of Sheffield, from 1905
- The University College, Sheffield, 1897 - 1905
- The Sheffield Technical School, 1884 - 1897
- Firth College, 1879 - 1897
- The University of Sheffield Medical School, 1828 - 1897

Legislative context

The University archive aims to comply with existing legislative requirements as they pertain to information management and information rights. This includes the GDPR and Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988 but may also include other pieces of legislation or regulatory requirements pertaining to records. Typically the University of Sheffield is the Data Controller for material it has created and retained within the University archive and there are legal exemptions for the retention of personal data within the archive as set out within the GDPR and the DPA 2018.

Exclusions

The University of Sheffield archive will not accept offers of material relating to the collecting remits of:-

- The University of Sheffield Special Collections, the National Fairground and Circus Archive (NFCA) or the University's Heritage Office.
- University of Sheffield PhD theses (copies of which are deposited with the University's institutional repository (White Rose eTheses Online) as a condition of the degree being awarded).
- Assessed work at undergraduate or postgraduate level, such as examination scripts or theses produced as a result of Masters dissertations.
- The collecting remit of Sheffield City Archives (encompassing the city of Sheffield and county of South Yorkshire).
- The collecting remits of other Universities.
- Duplicated material or material not directly created by the University or its predecessor institutions.
- It also excludes records held within University departments prior to transfer, until such a time that they are selected or transferred to the University archive and are under the custody of the archive service.

Collection policy statement - scope of acquisition

The University exists as an organisation with multiple entities:-

- A research organisation
- A teaching and learning organisation
- A part of the local, national and international community
- A member of the wider higher education community
- A community in itself

It is within this context and to reflect the work, activities and relationships above that the University archive will aim to identify and permanently preserve records.

The records may take the form of minutes, agenda papers, reports, correspondence, memoranda, working papers, electronic documents, emails, online transactions, data held in databases or on tape or disks, maps, plans, photographs, sound and video recordings, and microforms. They may exist as information assets within IT systems or as master sets of University publications. Records may also include organisations and societies created by the University, documenting the social and cultural activities of staff or students.

Specifically records that are of continuing value may include (but are not limited to):-

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- minutes of decision-making bodies such as the Council and its committees, Faculty Boards and committees approving policy and authorising action
- records documenting policy development and implementation, precedent and high-profile cases, high-level negotiations and agreements, submissions to significant enquiries, strategic planning and reviews, and statutory reporting
- architectural maps or plans, and records relating to the University's buildings and grounds, including land acquisition, building ownership, property management, and procurement of capital equipment.
- material relating to openings, events or special occasions.
- financial records including annual budget submissions, annual financial statements and general ledger reports, audit reports, delegation schedules, and contracts documenting ownership of intellectual property and conditions of donation.
- personnel records for senior staff and other significant staff and students
- records documenting teaching, including course outlines, assessment records, and copies of examination papers
- student records relating to academic achievement and graduation
- audio-visual materials documenting the University's development, programs, staff and students such as photographs and film of people and events, and oral history interviews of significant people
- master sets of publications such as annual reports, calendars, faculty handbooks, newsletters, media releases, programs for events and ceremonies, conference proceedings and promotional material

Additional considerations

- The University archive will utilise existing collections and the University Records Retention Schedule (RRS) to identify and document records that fall within the scope above. Departments that create such records will be identified and will work with the University archive to transfer material as appropriate.
- The University records centre may directly transfer material. For an explanation of the operation of the records centre see [University records centre](#)
- Occasionally the University archive may receive material from external individuals or organisations that may fit within its collection policy. It is the University archives preference that such material offered to it as a gift. If this happens then the University archive will make clear that material is accepted as a gift.
- Any material offered to the University archive will be assessed against this collection policy. If it is not deemed appropriate to accept material, then that material may be refused, returned or recommended for offer to an alternative archive.
- The University archive does not as standard purchase records.

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- Material within existing collections may be reviewed and subsequently disposed of if it is determined that it does not conform to this collection policy. The appraisal of such material will take place by a qualified archivist, be documented and in accordance with this policy.
- There are also circumstances where the extent, format or physical condition are factors in the ability to approve and collect material for preservation purposes. If this is the case they will be clearly documented and reasons provided.
- The University has a Library Collections acquisition group and in exceptional circumstances this may be used to consider particular issues or cases.

Appraisal

Appraisal is the process of identifying and selecting material of the highest archival value, avoiding duplication. The University archive must be able to preserve material permanently and must therefore limit acquisition to records of the highest archival value supporting the strategic objectives and collection themes outlined above. Appraisal decisions take account of the provenance of material (the organisational and functional context in which they were created) and their content. The University archive will aim to undertake organisation-wide analysis of functions as a guide to identifying material of value for business and archival purposes. This approach will be embedded into the University's RRS where possible.

In order to develop appropriate processes and procedures for the identification of material and its subsequent transfer to and custody within the University archive, it will be necessary to develop clear responsibility and accountability for such activities. Departments who have material identified as worthy of permanent preservation will be asked to work with the University archive to develop arrangements for ensuring material is taken into the custody of the archive and preserved. The University archive will also work with other areas such as Digital Preservation to ensure development of appropriate guidance and frameworks that allow long term preservation of material held digitally. Further guidance will be developed for departments on such processes as the University develops its digital preservation work.

Records will be appraised in relation to administrative, legal, financial, evidential, informational, research and cultural values, and take into account the protection of the rights and interests of the University, obligations to its staff and students (including legal and regulatory), as well as research interests relating to Higher Education and the wider research community.

Roles and Responsibilities

- The University archive sits within the University Library. The Director of Library Services and University Librarian is accountable for the overall function of the University archive.
- The Head of Records Management and University archive is responsible for operational activity of the University archive. They are responsible for development of the appropriate policy, procedure and process framework to ensure physical and intellectual custody of material. They report to the University Librarian.
- Members of staff within Special Collections and the NFCA are consulted and informed on certain matters when necessary. This may also include the Special Collections, Heritage and Archives Acquisition Group.
- Certain members of staff within departments across the wider University are responsible for working with the University archive to ensure that material is appropriately identified and transferred to the University archive.
- Certain members of staff may also be responsible for assisting with more technical activities to identify and gather material in accordance with good practice. This may include colleagues in IT Services and the University Digital Preservation Manager.

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