

# **City of Westminster Archives Centre**

## **Acquisition Policy**

**August 2009**



**City of Westminster**

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## Acquisition Policy

### **A POLICY AND MISSION STATEMENT**

- A.1** This policy aims to define and clarify the criteria used to determine the selection of items to be held in the City of Westminster Archives Centre. Such a definition will ensure that appropriate material is acquired to further the aims of Westminster City Archives as expressed in its mission statement (see **A.2**).
- A.2** Westminster City Archives aims to provide a centre of excellence, where archives and local studies materials are acquired, preserved and made accessible, in order to raise the profile of Westminster's unique heritage within a global context.

### **B STATUTORY POSITION**

- B.1** Westminster City Archives provides an archives and local studies service in compliance with the requirements of the Local Government (Records) Act 1962, the Local Government Act 1972, the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 and the Westminster City Council Library Bylaws.
- B.2** The Archives Centre is designated by the Bishop of London, under the terms of the Parochial Registers and Records Measure 1978, as the repository for ecclesiastical records for the pre-1965 City of Westminster.
- B.3** The Archives Centre has also been appointed by the Lord Chancellor as a repository for specified classes of public records under the provisions of Section 4 of the Public Records Act 1958. These include Petty Sessions records, probate records of the Westminster Commissary Court and Coroner's Court Records. The archives are stored under the conditions specified in British Standard 5454.
- B.4** The Archives Centre is recognised by the Master of the Rolls as a repository for manorial and tithe documents under the Law of Property Act 1922 and the Tithe Act 1936.

- B.5** The Archives Centre is recognised by the Historical Manuscripts Commission (HMC) as a suitable repository under the *Standard for Record Repositories*.

## **C ARCHIVES ACQUISITIONS**

### **C.1 Geographical area**

Archives are acquired which relate to the geographical area covered by the present City of Westminster, including the former Metropolitan Boroughs of Paddington and St Marylebone.

### **C.2 Chronological period**

All records that meet the selection criteria are accepted regardless of date.

Council records are only accepted when they have reached the end of their active life-cycle, in consultation with the Records Management Centre and generating departments.

### **C.3 Genre and media of records held**

- C.3.1** The Archives Centre exists primarily to care for the non-current records of Westminster City Council and its predecessor authorities, where these are judged to be worthy of permanent retention on legal, administrative or historical grounds.

- C.3.2** The Archives Centre also holds parish registers and ecclesiastical parish records under the statutory obligations referred to in **2.2**, and public records under the statutory obligations referred to in **2.3**.

- C.3.3** The Archives Centre collects non-current records of local businesses, organisations or individuals relating to, or emanating from, the area comprising the present City of Westminster, including records of estates, churches, societies, schools, businesses and private individuals, where these are judged to be worthy of permanent retention on legal, administrative or historical grounds.

- C.3.4** Autograph letters of Westminster residents and single item archives will not be collected unless they add significantly to our knowledge of Westminster.

- C.3.5** Selected microform or facsimile copies of relevant Westminster records held elsewhere are collected.

**C.3.6** The archives are not defined by format and may include paper, parchment, computer disks, audio-visual media, or any other format which holds unique legal, administrative or historical evidence deemed worthy of permanent preservation.

**C.3.7** Westminster City Archives will not normally accept three-dimensional artefacts unless they have a special relationship with the associated archives held or are intended to form part of the Education Officer's handling collection.

**C.3.8** The archives should reflect the rich, cultural diversity of Westminster and may include items in languages other than English.

#### **C.4 Co-operation with other repositories**

**C.4.1** The City of Westminster Archives Centre will not collect material which complies more closely with the acquisitions criteria of another local authority or specialist repository.

**C.4.2** Should a dispute over a deposit arise with another repository, the advice of an independent arbiter (e.g. the Royal Historical Manuscripts Commission or the Business Archives Council) will be sought.

### **D ACQUISITIONS PROCESSING**

#### **D.1 Methods of acquisition**

Records are acquired by:-

- transfer from Council Departments
- transfer from Records Management Centre
- donation
- indefinite loan
- purchase

Potential acquisitions will be surveyed by professional staff from the Archives Centre prior to acceptance. Documents will only be purchased if they are deemed to be of outstanding importance to the City of Westminster.

#### **D.2 Terms and conditions**

**D.2.1** Only documents which are deemed to be of sufficient quality for permanent preservation will be accepted.

**D.2.2** The City of Westminster Archives Centre is committed to promoting access to collections and will not generally accept material that has long closure periods or complex access restrictions. However, legal and administrative restrictions on access to records, including confidentiality restrictions for personnel records, will be observed.

**D.2.3** Standard terms and conditions of deposit are stated in **City of Westminster Archives Centre Terms of Deposit of Records**, a copy of which is attached (**Appendix 1**) Where necessary, these conditions may vary according to circumstances e.g. access restrictions specified by the donor.

**D.2.4** Documents will not be accepted from persons or institutions who have no legal right to donate, deposit or sell them.

**D.2.5** Finding aids may be required with deposits where the bulk is likely to render the documents otherwise inaccessible until processed.

**D.2.6** The Archives Centre will not normally accept records where there are not sufficient resources available to store and administer them to the required standards as defined in British Standard 5454, or where the equipment is unavailable to read or otherwise access the material.

### **D.3 Selection and deaccessioning**

**D.3.1** Records relating to national or international businesses/organisations which happen to have offices based in Westminster will not be collected, unless they represent an integral part of the City of Westminster

**D.3.2** In accordance with the wishes and requirements of depositors, Westminster City Archives will evaluate and select for destruction those documents that are not deemed worthy of permanent preservation (e.g. ephemera and duplicate material), and the intention shall be made clear at the time of transfer.

**D.3.3** Once selected and accessioned, records will be preserved permanently. However collections received prior to the implementation of the current acquisitions policy will be re-evaluated and, if necessary, deaccessioned.

## **E LOCAL STUDIES ACQUISITION POLICY**

The following categories of material are acquired:

### **E.1 Books**

- all books on Westminster, including pamphlets, theses and all Council publications
- books on London, or other subjects, which include a substantial amount on Westminster
- general reference books needed by the staff for their work and collection on archives (their care and use) and conservation
- guides to neighbouring record offices and to specific classes of archives (e.g. books on probate records)
- reference books on genealogy and related subjects and biographical reference works
- books relating to the life and works of William Blake forming part of the Preston Blake collection

The collection does **not** include:-

- biographies (except where the Westminster connections are very strong)
- fiction
- Westminster imprints
- annual reports of Westminster firms, HMSO publications etc

### **E.2 Periodicals**

The following are acquired:-

- Council minutes
- local papers and periodicals, including parish magazines and residents' associations publications
- general periodicals on local history and those specifically on London
- periodicals on archives and conservation

### **E.3 Cuttings**

Cuttings taken from newspapers and periodicals are acquired. These should be mainly topographical, but should also include anything about Council policy or any subject particularly relevant to Westminster.

Cuttings are **not** collected on:-

- theatre criticism
- law reports
- photographs of people other than members or officers of the Council
- unidentified parts of Westminster (e.g. "a flat in Mayfair")
- reviews (of restaurants, clubs, exhibitions etc) unless these include substantial information about the history of architecture of the site or premises

#### **E.4 Theatre collection**

Theatre programmes, playbills and material relating to London theatres are acquired.

The following criteria apply to the acquisition of **theatre programmes**:

- Pre-1970 programmes: acquired for all London theatres that do not maintain a publicly accessible archive.
- Post-1970 programmes: acquired for theatres within Westminster.
- Royal Opera House programmes acquired up to 1970.

#### **E.5 Maps**

Maps of Westminster are acquired with the following exceptions:-

- small scale maps unless they are for dates when no larger scale exists
- current Ordnance Survey maps if smaller than 1:1250

#### **E.6 Prints**

Images of Westminster past and present are acquired under the following criteria:-

- topographical accuracy is more important than artistic merit
- they are not duplicates (or effectively duplicates) of items already in our custody
- they are not oil paintings or colour photographs, except by donation

#### **E.7 Microfilm and CD-ROMs**

Microfilms, aperture cards, transparencies and CD-ROMs are also acquired under the following categories:-

- microfilms of our own material in order to preserve original items

- microfilms of items which are difficult to handle
- microfilms of Westminster material held elsewhere
- aperture cards of maps
- transparencies to illustrate talks

## **F ACCESS**

- F.1** Each new acquisition, and any restrictions on its access or use, will be notified to the public at the earliest opportunity
- F.2** Westminster City Archives will supply copies of its finding aids to the Historical Manuscripts Commission, acquisition donors and any appropriate bodies as deemed relevant.

## **G REVIEW**

The Acquisitions Policy will be reviewed in April 2011.

# City of Westminster Archives Centre

## Terms of deposit of records

1. Westminster City Archives is willing to accept records on indefinite loan. This in no way affects the ownership of the records.
2. Records which are deemed to be of no historical interest may be returned to the depositor or, with the consent of the depositor, transferred to a more appropriate place of deposit or destroyed.
3. Records which are deposited on indefinite loan are housed in strong rooms with the Council's own archives. The Council will take all reasonable precautions to preserve the records from damage, loss or theft, but shall not otherwise be liable beyond this to the depositor for any damage to or loss or theft of them during the time of deposit.
4. The Council reserves the right to microfilm or otherwise copy the records in order to preserve them. The ownership of all such copies is vested in the Council.
5. The records may be stamped and numbered with a finding reference for identification and security.
6. Records will be listed as soon as practicable as part of the programme of listing, and a copy of the list will be provided free of charge to the depositor. The ownership of copyright in the lists shall be vested in the Council.
7. Records will be available to the public during the advertised opening hours of the City Archives. Restrictions may be placed on the use of records by agreement between the depositor and the City Archivist (acting on behalf of the Council).
8. The Council retains the right to refuse access to documents, for example to those which are too fragile to use until they have been repaired.
9. Copies of records may be supplied to the public for private study, in accordance with the Copyright Acts in force at the time. The

depositor will be asked before a document is reproduced for publication. Where legal enquiries are known to be being made, the permission of the depositor will be requested before the documents are produced.