

City of Westminster Archives Centre

**Collections Acquisition, Management &
Development Policy**

February 2016



City of Westminster

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Collections Acquisition, Management & Development Policy

A POLICY AND MISSION STATEMENT

- A.1** This policy aims to define why and how the City of Westminster Archives acquires, preserves, develops and provides access to the archive and book collections in its care. This policy should be read in conjunction with the Access Policy, Digital Preservation Policy and Conservation and Preservation Policy. Such definitions will ensure that material is acquired, managed and developed appropriately 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, and in so doing record the built environment and significant events, organisations and individuals who have contributed to the City of Westminster's remarkable life, both past and present. The service aims to meet Westminster City Council's key objectives, stimulating a sense of community identity and raising the profile of Westminster's unique heritage within a global context.
- A.3** This policy, along with other policies and procedures, serves as a guide for Archive staff and demonstrates the coordinated approach to collection management adopted by City of Westminster Archives.

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 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 PD 5454:2012.

- 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.

C SCOPE OF COLLECTIONS

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 **B.2**, and public records under the statutory obligations referred to in **B.3**.

- C.3.3** The Archives Centre collects non-current records of 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, digital files, 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 and Interpretation 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, such as The National Archives or the Business Archives Council, will be sought.

D MANAGEMENT OF COLLECTIONS

D.1 Methods of acquisition

Records are acquired by:-

- transfer from Council Departments
- transfer from the 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. See **Digital Preservation Policy** for accepted digital formats.

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. See **Access Policy** for further details of restrictions to access.

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, for example 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 PD5454:2012, or where the equipment is unavailable to read or otherwise access the material.

D.2.7 Commercial depositors who deposit more than 100 linear metres of records will be subject to an annual charge per linear metre for storage.

D.3 Selection, de-accessioning and disposal

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, for example 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 normally be preserved permanently. However, the collection will be subject to periodic review and where necessary the subsequent disposal or destruction of records. This may also include transferring records to a more appropriate archive or returning them to the original depositor if appropriate.

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, eg. 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 the history of London
- periodicals on archives and conservation

E.3 Cuttings

Cuttings taken from newspapers and periodicals are no longer actively acquired. The cuttings collection is mainly topographical and may 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

Playbills and material relating to Westminster theatres are acquired.

Due to an ongoing project to catalogue the theatre programme collection, the Archives Centre is currently only accepting donations of West End theatre programmes pre-1960.

The theatre programme acquisition criteria will be revised and published when acquisitions resume at the end of the cataloguing project.

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 Microform and CD-ROMs

Microfilm, microfiche, aperture cards 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

F. MANAGEMENT AND COLLECTION INFORMATION

F.1 Accessions will be assessed for preservation and conservation needs on arrival.

F.2 An acknowledgement email will be sent to the depositor within 10 days and a copy of this placed in the Depositors Records file.

F.3 An accession record will be created on CALM, which will include a collection level description.

F.4 More detailed cataloguing is carried out by trained and qualified staff to ISAD(G) standards, though sorting, listing and cleaning may be carried out by non-professional staff and volunteers under supervision.

- F.5 All catalogues will be made available online on the Archives online catalogue WESTCAT.
- F.6 Production slips from item requests are used to inform analysis customer demand and can inform conservation, cataloguing and digitisation priorities.
- F.7 The management of the printed collection is provided by a qualified librarian.

G. MANAGEMENT AND COLLECTION CARE

- G.1 Preservation and conservation are essential to the long term survival and accessibility to archive collections. See our **Conservation and Preservation Policy**.

H ACCESS

- H.1 Each new acquisition, and any restrictions on its access or use, will be notified to the public at the earliest opportunity.
- H.2 Westminster City Archives will make all accessions available for research on demand, subject to legislative and previously agreed restrictions. See **Access Policy** for more detail.

I COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT

- I.1 Westminster City Archives aims to ensure the continued development of its collections. It will continue to build on its strengths and aim to identify and address existing gaps in the collections.

- I.2 Strengths of the existing collections:

The main strengths of the existing collection of official council archives, which include the records of predecessor administrative authorities, are an almost complete set of rate books from the 16th century to the late 20th century and an unparalleled set of poor law records for the 18th and 19th centuries.

The largest collections of deposited archives include records of building development by major estates, such as Grosvenor, Howard de Walden

and Eyre. The retail and furniture-making businesses are well represented by Liberty, Jaeger and Gillow.

The local studies collection includes over 60,000 prints and photographs recording the built environment and the communities of Westminster past and present.

I.3 Identifying gaps in the collections:

Westminster City Archives will continue to identify aspects of the City's history that are not currently sufficiently represented in the collections.

The Archives will do this by:

- increasing and improving the information we hold about our collections
- analysing use of the collections
- consulting with key stakeholders
- reviewing this policy on a regular basis

I.4 Priorities for Collection Development:

The Archives Centre seeks to maintain its intake of records of major council activities, including the acquisition of records in electronic format, and records from key private organisations and individuals.

The Archives aims to build a more representative sample of records from long-established businesses and schools in Westminster.

Recognising the importance of the rich cultural diversity of Westminster, where an estimated 30% of the population is from BAME communities according to the 'Civic Renewal Programme, Comprehensive Performance Assessment, Briefing Note', the Archives Centre aims to take a central role in social inclusion by "ensuring that collections comprehensively reflect the make-up of society" (London Archives Regional Council, 'Out of the Past into the Future: Priorities for Archive Development in London') and promoting access to these records. As the Historical Manuscripts Commission points out that "it is the experience of many researchers that a good deal of documentary evidence for the existence and the role of ethnic minorities in history does in fact survive in the established archival collections if only there were more adequate means to identify all the relevant references" ('Archives at the Millennium, 28th Report of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts, 1991-1999').

K REVIEW

The Collections Acquisition, Management & Development Policy will be reviewed every five years, the next review being scheduled for February 2021.

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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.