

City of Westminster Archives Centre

Acquisition Policy

December 2018



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 exists to support Read Learn Connect by preserving and sharing the unique written and visual heritage of Westminster, fostering community identity and pride for current and future generations.

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 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 BS 4971:2017.
- 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 and public records under the statutory obligations referred to in **Section B**.

- 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, such as parish records of Westminster held at the London Metropolitan Archives.

C.3.6 The archives are not defined by format and may include paper, parchment, audio-visual media, digital formats 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 regardless of language.

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 National Archives or 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 Deposit Agreement**, 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. These must be signed by the donor upon deposit to the archives.
- 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** Detailed lists or finding aids may be required with sizable deposits or deposits in languages other than English, in order to ensure that the records are processed in a timely manner and access can be provided
- 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 BS 4971:2017, 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** City of Westminster Archives reserves the right to refuse archive collections which it feels would be better suited in a different repository or would not enhance the archive collections, even if it meets the criteria of this policy.
- D.3.3** In accordance with the wishes and permission of depositors where possible, Westminster City Archives will evaluate and select for disposal those documents that are not deemed worthy of permanent preservation (e.g. ephemera and duplicate material or material beyond physical repair)The intention shall be made clear at the time of transfer.

D.3.4 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 Council publications
- books on London, or other subjects, which include a substantial amount on Westminster or notable Westminster residents
- 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 Westminster connections are very strong)
- fiction
- Westminster imprints
- annual reports of Westminster firms
- government department publications

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 only where these are the best/only information source on the subject or represent a notable opinion. These should be mainly topographical, relate to 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 or architecture of the site or premises

E.4 Theatre collection

Material relating to Westminster and West End theatres and performance venues are acquired. These include:

- programmes
- playbills
- photograph albums

Other material may be accepted at the discretion of an Archivist.

Programmes for theatres outside of Westminster or duplicates of material already held will not be accepted. If these are offered as part of a larger donation, they will be disposed of in line with our Terms of Deposit.

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
- widely published maps of which we already have copies in the collection

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, except by donation

E.7 Surrogates

Microfilms, aperture cards, transparencies, digital copies and other surrogates are acquired under the following categories:-

- copies used in order to preserve original items
- copies of items which are difficult to handle
- copies of Westminster material held elsewhere
- maps for reference purposes

F COLLECTING PRIORITIES

Westminster City Archives will proactively work to collect records on the following areas for its archive and local studies collections:

- Historical and current material representing the LGBTQI communities, with a special focus on the people and places within the Soho area
- Historical and current material representing the rich ethnic diversity of the City of Westminster which better reflects the demographic makeup of modern Westminster
- Born Digital records from the City of Westminster and other potential donors
- Plans and images reflecting topographical changes in the City of Westminster
- Rapid Response Collecting in response to major incidents or loss of historically important businesses in the area.

G ACCESS

- G.1** Each new acquisition, and any restrictions on its access or use, will be notified to the public at the earliest opportunity through its online catalogue WESTCAT
- G.2** Westminster City Archives will contribute to The National Archives catalogue Discovery, and other relevant portals to improve access to its collections
- G.3** Westminster City Archives will complete an annual return of new deposits to The National Archives, and will supply deposit lists to donors and any appropriate bodies as deemed relevant.

H REVIEW

The Acquisitions Policy will be reviewed in November 2022.

City of Westminster Archives Centre

Deposit Agreement

Part One: Terms of Deposit

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 beyond repair or 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, digitise 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 cataloguing. The reference number will be provided 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 Archives Centre. Restrictions may be placed on the use of records by agreement between the depositor and an 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, or those closed in line with data protection and public records legislation.

9. Copies of records may be supplied to the public for private study, in accordance with the Copyright Act 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.

Part Two: Agreement

Name:	
Address:	
Email:	Phone:

Description of deposit:	
Covering dates:	Extent:
Terms of deposit:	
Conditions/special requirements:	
Date of deposit:	

- I agree to the Terms of Deposit as set out above
- I agree to have my name and contact details added to the City of Westminster's collections database for the duration of the retention of the deposit

Signed (Depositor):

Name:

Date:

Signed (Westminster City Archives):

Name:

Date: