

## **Accessions to Repositories Guidance and FAQs**

### **What is Accessions to Repositories?**

Accessions to Repositories is the annual survey of repositories' new acquisitions during the previous calendar year.

### **Information supplied during this survey was used to update the National Register of Archives (NRA) – what has happened to the NRA?**

The National Register of Archives closed in October 2014. This information has been integrated and continues to be made accessible in [Discovery](#), our catalogue. Archive users can now search, browse and tag 32 million descriptions of records held by UK archives through Discovery. Discovery now incorporates data from:

- [National Register of Archives \(NRA\)](#)
- [Directory of archives \(ARCHON\)](#)
- [Access to Archives \(A2A\)](#)
- [Manorial Documents Register \(MDR\)](#)

Information gathered during this accessions survey will be used to update records and record creator information within Discovery and will continue to be published at <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/accessions/>. For more information about this, please visit our Discovery and Finding Archives [project page](#).

### **What impact will the development of Discovery have on this survey in the future?**

As we develop new tools which will enable contributors to update existing and future descriptions in Discovery, we will seek to change the way we ask for and receive accessions data. This project is likely to take a number of years to complete and we will work with archives at the appropriate time to develop ways of taking in accessions data which improve the process for all concerned.

### **What information is collected for the Accessions to Repositories survey?**

Our focus has traditionally been the survey of manuscript material, but this has been expanded to include material such as photographs and audio-visual records.

### **Why is the survey conducted?**

We conduct the survey:

- to update our resources in Discovery
- to select entries for thematic digests, which are reproduced in a number of learned journals and newsletters

- to collect and make available online information about collections which have not yet been, or may not be, part of a formal cataloguing process for some time;
- to track the location of manuscripts and records that we have identified as part of our [Sales notification programme](#)

### **Who takes part?**

We invite repositories known to be actively collecting beyond their own institutional records.

### **I don't seem to be on the invitation list, how can I take part?**

If you usually take part in our survey but have not received an invitation by mid January, please contact us.

If you do not normally receive an invitation but, as an institution actively collecting archival material, wish to take part in the survey, please email [asd@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:asd@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk) , with "Accessions to Repositories" in the subject line.

### **How do I submit Accessions information?**

You can submit your Accessions information using the MS Excel template included with the invitation email using "Accessions to Repositories" in the subject line.

### **Do I have to use your template?**

Using our template is not compulsory, but it does help us to process your information so it is our preferred option.

You can use other formats, but we need *all* returns to include the following details:

- Repository name
- ARCHON number – this can be found by searching our [Find an Archive](#) website, formerly the ARCHON Directory. If your page needs updating please fill out our [online form](#)
- Creator information – this should include full name, dates, epithet (for example occupation), descriptor and/or function for any entities (corporate bodies, families or individuals) that created the records. The more detail we have will help us to disambiguate creators, verify and add information to our resources and link between related collections.
- Collection reference number and/or accession reference
- Summary description of records – including covering dates
- Quantity
- Whether the deposit is an addition to an existing collection in your repository – if yes, please provide the reference number
- Whether you deem the collection to be particularly significant

- Catalogue link, if available – this should be a permanent URL. This is a web address that will consistently point to your specific information resource such as an entry in an online catalogue

We recognise that with newly accessioned material which is uncatalogued, not all details about the creator or nature of the records may be known. If exact details or dates have not been identified, please give an approximation e.g. personal records, 20<sup>th</sup> cent.

Please email [asd@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:asd@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk) , with “Accessions to Repositories” in the subject line and your return attached.

### **What if we have not received any deposits this year or have not had the capacity to complete a return?**

Please let us know what your situation is by sending an email to [asd@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:asd@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk) with the phrase ‘nil return’. Please include “Accessions to Repositories” in the subject line.

### **What happens after I submit my return?**

Your return will be acknowledged by a member of the Accessions Team within five working days. If you have not received a response within this time, please [contact our Collections Knowledge Team](#).

### **What happens to my return after it is submitted and acknowledged?**

Your return is logged on our system, and information is added to Discovery. Once completed, collections information from your return is assigned to a relevant thematic digest if applicable and published [online](#).

### **What criteria do you use to select entries for Accessions?**

Although accessions information is used to update Discovery, we will only select entries for the published Accessions survey based on the following criteria:

1. Is there an identifiable creator of the records? As most material for Accessions is added via the indexes in Discovery, any material not suitable for indexing is unlikely to be directly entered into the Accessions database. To be indexible, the material needs to be associated with a creator that falls within the categories of corporate body, family or person. This is why some material like individual items or unsourced material cannot currently be added to Discovery or Accessions.
2. Will the material be used for a thematic digest if included in the Accessions survey? One of the benefits of Accessions is being able to flag up new collections to interested groups. Potential interest can strengthen/weaken the case for inclusion. If we think that one of the groups or journals that we distribute digests to would have particular interest in the material this gives us extra justification for including it.

3. Additional deposits are added to the Accessions survey only if the material is significant enough to merit a separate mention e.g. a very long run of records. Many repositories receive additions to existing collections annually and therefore we do not need to alert users to these routine additions in the same way. We use this information to update Discovery but would not include this in the published survey.

4. Accruing series are treated like additional deposits as most local authority record offices will report further accessions of certain bodies, such as parishes, parish councils, coroners' records. Again, unless there is a compelling reason to the contrary these will be added to Discovery and not included in the published Accessions survey.

5. Short date range of records: this also supports exclusion, especially when in combination with the above criteria, e.g. coroner's records 2006.

6. Nonconformist marriage registers: their evidential value is slight given that they exist in duplicate and all the information is also held by General Register Office (GRO). They should be noted for Discovery but not included in the Accessions survey.

7. Transferred local authority records where the repository is essentially taking in the records of the parent authority will usually be excluded.

8. Unless anonymous records are of exceptional interest, or have unusually early dates, we would not normally highlight them in Accessions.

### **Why have you missed some of our important collections?**

This is probably because we have applied one or more of the above selection criteria. We are also reliant on the information you supply, and so if a description is not substantial enough to give us the information we need it is difficult to make an informed assessment of what your collections are or of their historical significance. Where possible we will try to clarify the information you have supplied, but with large returns it is not always possible.

### **Can I indicate significant and additional collections?**

Yes, please do. If you use our template, please use our new columns to highlight any significant and/or additional collections. If you do not use our template, please clearly indicate particularly important and/or additional collections elsewhere in your return.

### **Is it possible to update our entries when the Accessions survey has closed for the year or add missed entries to previous Accessions listings?**

Unfortunately, we are only able to correct minor errors to previous years' listings as the survey is published once as a set of static web pages. However we are able to add your previous years' listings to Discovery and further details if a collection becomes catalogued. If you do discover a mistake or need to make changes to your

entries in Discovery, please email us at [asd@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:asd@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk) , with “Discovery Updates” in the subject line.

Please note that due to peaks in workload, it can take us longer to turn around new lists we receive at certain times of the year.

### **How do I keep information about my collections up to date?**

It is helpful for us to know when the information you have supplied has been changed or updated so we can keep Discovery up to date. Please tell us about changes to your catalogue URLs, catalogue reference numbers and if more accurate dates or record content information become available. You can submit new and updated collections information throughout the year. [Visit our contributor page](#) for more information.

### **Why am I unable to edit and upload my own data?**

We are currently unable to automatically import your data or allow you to edit it in situ. However we are currently developing contributor tools which will allow you to make changes to your data in the future. Please see our [contributor page](#) and [Finding Archives project page](#) for up to date information about this.

### **Where can I find more information about Accessions to Repositories?**

Please email us with any further questions at [asd@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:asd@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk) , with “Accessions to Repositories” in the subject line.