

Scope of Archive Service Accreditation Scheme

I. Formal Definitions

Records

- I.1 *'information created, received, and maintained as evidence and information by an organization or person, in pursuance of legal obligations or in the transaction of business'*
(ISO 15489-1)

Archives

- I.2 *"Materials created or received by a person, family or organisation, public or private, in the conduct of their affairs and preserved because of the enduring value contained in them or as evidence of the functions and responsibilities of their creator, especially those materials maintained using the principles of provenance, original order and collective control; permanent records."* [our emphasis]
(ISO 16175-1:2010)
- I.3 Archives may be informal in terms of their format and the 'business' to which they relate: for example, a group of love letters may be created and maintained for 'the conduct of...affairs' of a personal and private nature.

Archive Service

- I.4 The word 'Archives' is also commonly used to refer to the place or institution where such material is kept. As the word is often misused to refer to mere 'dumping grounds' for older records which have ceased to be properly managed, but not yet destroyed, this scheme prefers the term 'archive service', meaning:

"An organisation, or part of an organisation, with a remit to manage and promote the preservation and use of archives in its custody"

- I.5 Archive Services will normally have custody of the archives of their own parent organisation but may also have custody (but not necessarily ownership) of the archives of other organisations or persons.
- I.6 Archive Services must offer some access to their archive collections beyond members of their own institution or organisation to seek formal accreditation under this scheme: however, this need not be their primary function, and may be more limited than services to specific user groups.

Records Management

- I.8 *'field of management responsible for the efficient and systematic management and control of the creation, receipt, maintenance use and disposition of records, including the processes for capturing and maintaining evidence of and information about business activities and transactions in the form of records'* (ISO 15489-1)
- I.9 All individuals and organisations maintain records in order to carry out their day to day activities. Only a small minority of these will have sufficient permanent cultural or operational value to justify their preservation as archives.

- 1.10 While records management as a day to day business function is outside the scope of the Archive Service Accreditation Scheme, it recognises that archival activity forms part the wider records management function, and that archival institutions will be unable to carry out their own functions successfully if the records management of organisations and individuals for whose archives they have responsibility is poor. The scheme therefore brings within scope those parts of the records management function relating to the selection and transfer of records to an archival institution at the appropriate point in the records lifecycle.

2. Identifying Archives in Practice

- 2.1 This section is intended to assist those working in related cultural domains or other organisational functions to identify archives which may be in their custody, and therefore to what extent they meet the eligibility criteria for the scheme. (See Eligibility: Criterion 1)
- 2.2 As the definitions of archives given above are functional rather than physical, when assessing whether any given object can be defined as (part of) an archive, it may be helpful to consider the following questions. If the answer to any of the items other than 7 below is NO, the object is probably not archival:
- 1) Was it primarily created to record information or evidence, or is it linked (physically, or in terms of prior use) to something else which conveys information when the two are taken together?
 - 2) Does the information or evidence it (they, if linked) contains relate to something specific done by the creator, or the person receiving it, in the course of their day to day business, rather than by people in general?
 - 3) Has it been kept by its creator or the person receiving it because it provides information, or serves as evidence, which supports the transaction of their personal or work business?
 - 4) Can the creator or receiver still be identified (at least in general terms, not necessarily a full biography), either from the object, or other information in/likely to come into your possession?
 - 5) Does it still convey the information/evidence originally intended?
 - 6) Is it likely to be of permanent value, either to the creator/receiver in respect of its original purpose, or to anyone else, for any purpose related to its function as a record?
 - 7) Is it unique in content? (not conclusive, but if no, it is usually less likely to be an archive).

The examples in Appendix A illustrate the principles underlying these questions in a practical context, and are indicative only.

Appendix A – Identifying Archives

I Principles

I.1 Function not Format

Physical format is not fundamental in identifying archives. Records (and hence archives) are defined primarily by the function for which they were originally created and used. Anything used as a substitute for fallible human memory in conveying information and evidence in a specific context may be a record, although some types of physical object are more commonly used for that purpose.

I.1.1 While usually thought of as handwritten or typed documents on paper (perhaps bound into files or volumes) they may also commonly include:

- Printed documents (or books, pamphlets etc)
- Photographs
- Digital objects (such as e-mail, databases etc)
- Audio/visual material
- Sketches, drawings
- Maps and plans

The list is not exhaustive and may include more exotic items, such as the knotted cords used for record keeping by Andean cultures or a variety of types of object.

I.1.2 By the same token, not all material in these formats will constitute records. In some cases there will be an overlap, or potential overlap, with physically similar, but functionally different, items, in others, the same physical item could be regarded as archival or not depending upon the context in which it is managed and the purposes it serves.

Some examples of this are given in the following sections.

I.2 Information and Memory

Archives are usually things which have been created, or at least adapted, to convey information (written, numerical, visual etc) so that people can remember what was said, done, or seen.

I.3 Specific Context and Purpose

They will usually have been created and used in a specific context, as part of wider record-keeping systems consisting of multiple objects. The context, relationships, rules, and practices associated with such systems are an essential part of what makes them a record. Some of these may be explicit (for example, a formal filing scheme) others may be implicit (if it's on my desk, it's something to do with my job). If this context is compromised, the individual objects may no longer function effectively as records.

I.3.1 Example 1

The Bank of Puddleby keeps a register containing personal ID details of all its customers and their bank account numbers. It also keeps a ledger containing details of activity on each account number. These were created and used by bank staff to keep track of the state of their financial transactions

with their customers and as evidence in case of dispute. If one of these items is destroyed, or knowledge of the relationship between them is lost, they can no longer serve that function, although they may still convey more limited information (the register will at least indicate who their customers are). If they are not physically marked to indicate this context (for example, by being labelled 'Bank of Puddleby: customer register') then if displaced from the custody of the Bank, where staff know what they are, they may lose their 'recordness' – becoming mere lists of unidentified names and figures.

1.4 Uniqueness

In practice it is unusual for an organisation or individual to create and retain for reference multiple identical copies. Where this happens, it is usually where a small number of copies are created to serve different functions in different parts of an organisation. The basic principle of a record being used for the transaction of specific business by specific persons is retained therefore.

1.4.1 Example:

Blankshire Museum staff have local copies of their timesheets, to manage their own work attendance. A copy, known as 'the blue copy' is sent regularly to county council HR, where it supports a variety of functions such as staff absence, payroll adjustment etc.

1.5 Use and Permanent Preservation

Archives are records which someone has decided to preserve permanently for some reason associated with their function as a record. They need not necessarily be 'old' (yet). Preservation may be on grounds of primary use (the records are of continuing value for the transaction of the same business functions in respect of which they were originally created or retained) or secondary use (anything else). In practice, the same records will often have value for both ongoing primary and secondary uses. Only a small proportion of the records maintained by most organisations or individuals will be worth preserving permanently (typically 2-5% of the total).

1.5.1 Example:

A medieval market charter may have value for historical research (secondary use), while remaining of value for the legal enforcement of current market rights by the holder (primary use).

2 Some common object types which may be archives

2.1 Printed Documents (including books, pamphlets etc)

The publications (electronic or hard copy) which make up the bulk of library collections would not normally be considered as 'archives' (although deposit libraries or those with major special/rare books collections have similar preservation functions to archive services and museums in that they hold material which is unique, close to unique or intended for permanent preservation as a representative of a much later print run). However, there may be instances where they need to be treated as archival or quasi-archival objects, and may be worth preserving permanently as a key record.

2.1.1 Example: master sets

A publishing house keeps a set of every publication it issues, in order to carry out its business functions (such as checking for textual errors, supporting intellectual property litigation, or actions for defamation, assessing the need for further editions etc). Note that it is important that this record set is maintained intact as an accurate and complete record of what it published – if it got mixed up

with another printing or edition, it could no longer support that specific business need. Its archival value derives from the context in which it is created and maintained - each item may derive from a print run of thousands of identical copies basically produced for resale. Similar considerations might exist in respect of a set maintained by an individual author.

2.1.2 Example: Annotations

Author A and author B are engaged in a vigorous public debate through their written works. Author B keeps a set of author A's works (purchased on Amazon in the normal way) in which he has marked out various phrases and passages with which he disagrees, to act as an aide memoire in writing his own counterblast. These annotations will be unique, and form a record of the things he objects to. If the works became divorced from the context of who owned and annotated them, the annotations would lose their meaning as a record of author B's thoughts and activities, and the works would become little different to any other copy of the same work. If author A and author B are important enough, this specific set of annotated works might be retained as a permanent archival record of their controversy, along with associated correspondence etc.

2.1.3 Example: printed base

Blankshire Borough highways department buys large quantities of published Ordnance Survey maps (or more likely these days, a licence for digital versions). It then adds annotations to these for various purposes eg it marks the footpaths and roads which the council has a responsibility to maintain in different colours, to help plan its highways maintenance process. These are records, and may well be kept permanently eg to indicate historic access rights.

2.2 Photographs

Most libraries and museums will hold quantities of photographs. Whether these can be regarded as archives may vary depending upon the nature of the item itself, and the way in which it has been managed within the institution. It would not be uncommon for an institution to hold both archival and non-archival photographs. In practice, the record status of photographs is frequently compromised by the fact that few people ever label their photos in any way, making identification (let alone decisions on record status) difficult.

2.2.1 Example: archival vs non-archival

Blankshire Local Studies Library holds thousands of photos. One of these is an unused Victorian picture postcard showing a local rural scene. It was taken by a local photographer at a specific time and place, but this is one of hundreds run off as stock in trade, and has not been used as a record by anyone. It is not regarded as archival in nature.

Another copy of the same postcard has been written on and sent to someone in Australia, who kept it among their personal archive as a record of their birthplace and the activities of the family they left behind when they emigrated. A descendent later donated it to the library for its unique value as part of the documentary heritage.

The original negative of the photo has also been acquired, along with a whole series of others, kept by the photographer as a permanent record of his output, along with a host of other related records such as customer order books, purchase ledgers etc. the whole forming his business archive.

2.2.2 Example: record vs art object

John Smith takes his camera on holiday to Bournemouth and takes lots of photos. When he comes home, he stores them all away (perhaps in an album/ a box/ his PC hard drive) so that in future years he can take them out and remind himself of his holiday and what he was doing. He has no intention of discarding them. They form part of his personal archive.

After his return, he sees a nice photo of the Eiffel Tower in a shop. He takes it home and hangs it on his wall in a frame because it looks nice. This is not part of his personal archive, because it was not created in the course of his own daily activity, and he is keeping it for aesthetic reasons, not as a reminder of his own activity.

2.2.3 Example : record vs stock photo

Blankshire County Council gets a lot of lawsuits from people who trip over cracks in the pavements, so it take photos of potential hazards, which are used by staff to prioritise repairs, or as evidence to defend the council in court. These may well be preserved permanently as archives

The BCC press department buys a stock photo of happy children from an agency to put on the front of the council's annual report. The photo is left with a pile of material in a cupboard and never looked at again. It is not a record (though a set of annual reports including the one with it on the cover might be, if retained as the record set, see above).

2.2.4 Example: Negatives vs Prints

In the examples above, Blankshire County Council may create a copy negative purely to facilitate production of additional copy prints for various purposes, but would regard the original negative as the record (and might need to produce it in court if someone suing the council over a pavement fall claimed that they had 'doctored' the prints produced to the court). Conversely, John may retain the print as his record and discard the negatives. Some of the copy prints might become records in their own right: for example, John sends a copy of one of his prints to his Aunt in Australia. She keeps it as part of her personal archive (a permanent record of what members of her family have been doing).

2.3 Digital objects

The Archive Service Accreditation encompasses both non-digital archives and digital archives, but not Archive Services who hold digital archives alone in its initial roll-out.

2.3.1 The main source of confusion here is the distinction between **digitisation** (the process of creating some kind of digital copy or version of an existing hard copy record) and **digital archives** (records originally created in digital form, such as email received in the course of business, and preserved permanently). Digital objects produced by digitisation projects are unlikely to constitute archives, being merely a copy of the original objects. It may be inconvenient if the digitised copy is destroyed or damaged, but it does not affect the preservation of the original record.

2.3.2 Occasionally, a person or organisation may decide to digitise hard copy records (for example, to scan all incoming correspondence) and retain the digital copy instead of the hard copy for normal business purposes, in which case the resulting digital objects will have become records, and may be worth preserving permanently as archives. Note that there may be issues of reliability, authenticity and integrity in this process, as the resulting digital objects may not 'work' as records if the digitising is not properly carried out.

2.3.3 However, since the 1990s many, if not most, records created or received by organisations and individuals will originate in digital formats of various kinds. In principle, this has no effect on their archival/record status: however, the ease with which digital objects can be transmitted, copied, altered, merged or destroyed, combined with the fact that the information content is not inherently linked to the physical medium and its context makes them problematic as records. It can also be difficult to identify the boundaries of a digital 'object' which may in fact consist of a temporary aggregation of different digital information pulled from a variety of contexts.

- 2.3.4 The key point for digital record keeping (and permanent preservation as digital archives) is that the physical medium is of less importance than that systems, processes and 'metadata' are in place to establish the context in which digital information was created and used, and retain integrity, authenticity and reliability to a degree which enables it to be considered a record. While identical duplicate digital objects may exist in large numbers, it is these external factors which will determine which (if any) of them constitute a record.

2.4 Audio-visual material

Again, purpose is the main issue here. Has the item been created and referred to for the conduct of the day to day affairs of an individual or organisation, or has it been produced (for example) for aesthetic or entertainment reasons?

2.4.1 Example: record vs publication

Puddleby Community History Group has been conducting recorded oral history interviews, with a view to maintaining these recordings as a permanent resource for local history research. The master recordings will be archives of the Group: they may also create various copies for sale, or for distribution to other LHS's, or for taking out to use in school sessions, but these are not archives. Again, some of their interviewees may keep the copies of the recordings which Group have given them as part of their own personal or family archive, to be handed on to their grandchildren etc.

2.5 Drawings, paintings and sketches

- 2.5.1 Similar considerations may apply to drawings, paintings or sketches, which can be created for basically aesthetic purposes (a portrait) or for the conduct of business (a police sketch of a suspect).

2.6 Maps and Plans

- 2.6.1 Manuscript maps and plans drawn up for reference and evidential purposes in the transaction of specific business are records, and will often be of sufficient value to retain as archives. Printed maps with extensive annotations made in the transaction of business may also be of sufficient value to retain as archives. As with printed books, printed record copies of maps may be retained as a core part of broader archives, such as mapmakers'.

2.6.2 Example: annotations

Puddleby Borough Council highways department has a copy of the printed 1937 6" Ordnance Survey map on which they have marked those roads which are private, those maintained by the county council and those which PBC have obligations to maintain. This is a record, created and maintained for the transaction of their road maintenance activity.

2.6.3 Example: print for specific transaction

Lord Puddleby sold off his estate in the 1940's, and for purposes of the auction, had a plan of the estate drawn up and printed in small numbers for circulation to potential bidders. The copy kept by his estate office at Puddleby Hall for permanent reference forms part of his estate archive.

2.7 Other objects

Occasionally, objects which are not in themselves designed for the recording of information may be used as part of a record-keeping system. In most cases where a series of such objects is extensive, it may be more practical, however, to consider the objects and the record-

keeping system separately (an extensive series of rock core samples, or a herbarium, and the associated records detailing where and when each one was taken, for example). This is a grey area, but it may be helpful to consider to what degree the ongoing value of the objects derives from their intrinsic properties, and to what extent it derives from their conscious organisation into a reference system, and the degree of permanence of the latter

2.7.1 Example: object attached to file

Puddleby Borough Police keeps a series of crime files (in crime number order) which mostly contain witness statements, reports, notes of phone conversations and other documents created or received in the course of an investigation. However, in a few cases they might also contain eg a blood-stained knife, along with the accompanying forensic report, or small samples of mud stains found at the crime scene. Although the blood-stained knife was not created as a record, it may in some senses have acquired record status by virtue of its association with the crime file, and may be preserved permanently as part of the PBC archive. (There may, of course be some curatorial and health and safety issues in preserving it physically in the file on a permanent basis).

2.8 Artificial collections

In some cases, cultural or heritage institutions with an explicit function to record the past may acquire some or all of the types of material listed above, with the aim of preserving it permanently. It is a moot point whether this constitutes an archive, as the material was not originally created or received in the course of business by that institution. However, there may be coherent archives within the artificial collection.

2.8.1 Example: community archive

Puddleby Community History Group operates a small heritage centre in Puddleby village. Here they collect all sorts of material including beer mats from the Puddleby Brewing Company, old postcards of Puddleby, and some pattern books from the old Puddleby Textile Company. All this is being permanently preserved as part of the day to day business of the PCHG, but the first two items are not archives (the PBC advertising department might have kept a record set of beer mats for reference, but there is nothing to suggest that this formed part of it) while the third set of items probably is, although a very fragmentary one.

2.9 Internal Records of Cultural/Heritage Institutions

Cultural and heritage institutions will themselves create, receive and maintain records in the course of their normal business. Some are like those of any other organisation (HR staff files, annual accounts, receipts etc). Others are used to administer their collections, which are being permanently preserved, and therefore need to be retained permanently for that purpose (primary use), These records will therefore form part of the archive of the institution itself and may have secondary values over and above that of the collections to which they relate (for example, the study of library history). There may, of course, be practical issues relating to the management of records which remain permanently 'current'.

2.9.1 Example: museum archive

Puddleby Museum originated in the gift of the private local archaeology collection of Colonel Blunt to the town in 1867. In addition to the main series of accession records, still used for day to day administration of the collections (primary use), there are a variety of other records which have value for a variety of primary and secondary purposes such as those relating to former staff, some of whom went on to become nationally famous, past exhibitions and events etc. Together these form the Museum's own archive, which is substantial in its own right.

2.9.2 Example: private library archive

Lord Puddleby used to own a nationally famous collection of rare books, but when the family fell on hard times after the war, most of these were all sold off to various collectors, and the last librarian retired in 1955. However, the librarian's correspondence still survives, along with the old MS catalogue and other records relating to the library, and these remain of value, both in administering the remains of the collection (primary use) and for those with an interest in library and bibliographic history. Although the library no longer survives as a distinct entity within the estate management, these remaining records still form part of the overall family archive.